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Mr. Colley Cibber.

Anno Ætatis. 67.

Vanloo. pinx. *G. Vander Gucht Sculp.*

AN

APOLOGY

FOR THE

LIFE

OF

Mr. COLLEY CIBBER, Comedian,

AND

Late PATENTEE of the *Theatre-Royal.*

With an Hiſtorical View of the STAGE *during his* OWN TIME.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

---------- *Hoc eſt*
Vivere bis, vitâ poſſe priore frui. Mart. lib. 2.

When Years no more of active Life retain,
'Tis Youth renew'd, to laugh 'em o'er again. Anonym.

LONDON:

Printed by JOHN WATTS for the AUTHOR.

M DCC XL.

TO A

CERTAIN GENTLEMAN.

SIR,

BECAUSE I know it would give you leſs Concern, to find your Name in an impertinent Satyr, than before the daintieſt Dedication of a modern Author, I conceal it.

Let me talk never ſo idly to you, this way; you are, at leaſt, under no neceſſity of taking it to yourſelf: Nor when I boaſt of your Favours, need you bluſh to have beſtow'd them. Or I may now give you all the Attributes, that

raiſe a wiſe, and good-natur'd Man, to Eſteem, and Happineſs, and not be cenſured as a Flatterer by my own, or your Enemies. ---- I place my own firſt; becauſe as they are the greater Number, I am afraid of not paying the greater Reſpect to them. Yours, if ſuch there are, I imagine are too well-bred to declare themſelves: But as there is no Hazard, or viſible Terror, in an Attack, upon my defenceleſs Station, my Cenſurers have generally been Perſons of an intrepid Sincerity. Having therefore ſhut the Door againſt them, while I am thus privately addreſſing you, I have little to apprehend, from either of them.

Under this Shelter, then, I may ſafely tell you, That the greateſt Encouragement, I have had to publiſh this Work, has riſen from the ſeveral Hours of Patience you have lent me, at the Reading it. It is true, I took the Advantage of your Leiſure, in the Country, where moderate Matters ſerve for Amuſement; and there indeed, how far your Good-nature, for an old Acquaintance, or your Reluctance to put the

Vanity

DEDICATION.

Vanity of an Author out of countenance, may have carried you, I cannot be ſure; and yet Appearances give me ſtronger Hopes: For was not the Complaiſance of a whole Evening's Attention, as much as an Author of more Importance ought to have expected? Why then was I deſired the next Day, to give you a ſecond Lecture? Or why was I kept a third Day, with you, to tell you more of the ſame Story? If theſe Circumſtances have made me vain, ſhall I ſay, Sir, you are accountable for them? No, Sir, I will rather ſo far flatter myſelf, as to ſuppoſe it poſſible, That your having been a Lover of the Stage (and one of thoſe few good Judges, who know the Uſe, and Value of it, under a right Regulation) might incline you to think ſo copious an Account of it a leſs tedious Amuſement, than it may naturally be, to others of different good Senſe, who may have leſs Concern, or Taſte for it. But be all this as it may; the Brat is now born, and rather, than ſee it ſtarve, upon the Bare Pariſh Proviſion, I chuſe thus clandeſtinely, to drop it at your Door, that it

may

may exerciſe One of your Many Virtues, your Charity, in ſupporting it.

If the World were to know, into whoſe Hands I have thrown it, their Regard to its Patron might incline them, to treat it as One of his Family: But in the Conſciouſneſs of what I *am*, I chuſe not, Sir, to ſay who You *are*. If your Equal, in Rank, were to do publick Juſtice to your Character, then indeed, the Concealment of your Name might be an unneceſſary Diffidence: But am I, Sir, of Conſequence enough, in any Guiſe, to do Honour to Mr.-----? were I to ſet him, in the moſt laudable Lights, that Truth, and good Senſe could give him, or his own Likeneſs would require; my officious Mite would be loſt in that general Eſteem, and Regard, which People of the firſt Conſequence, even of different Parties, have a Pleaſure, in paying him. Encomiums to Superiors, from Authors of lower Life, as they are naturally liable to Suſpicion, can add very little Luſtre, to what before was viſible to the publick Eye: Such Offerings (to uſe the Stile they

are

are generally dreſs'd in) like *Pagan* Incenſe, evaporate, on the Altar, and rather gratify the Prieſt, than the Deity.

But you, Sir, are to be approach'd in Terms, within the Reach of common Senſe: The honeſt Oblation of a chearful Heart, is as much as you deſire, or I am able to bring you: A Heart, that has juſt Senſe enough, to mix Reſpect, with Intimacy, and is never more delighted, than when your rural Hours of Leiſure admit me, with all my laughing Spirits, to be my idle ſelf, and in the whole Day's Poſſeſſion of you! Then, indeed, I have Reaſon to be vain; I am, then, diſtinguiſh'd, by a Pleaſure too great, to be conceal'd, and could almoſt pity the Man of graver Merit, that dares not receive it, with the ſame unguarded Tranſport! This Nakedneſs of Temper the World may place, in what Rank of Folly, or Weakneſs they pleaſe; but till Wiſdom, can give me ſomething, that will make me more heartily happy, I am content, to be gaz'd at, as I am, without leſſening my Reſpect, for

thoſe

thoſe, whoſe Paſſions may be more ſoberly cover'd.

Yet, Sir, will I not deceive you; 'tis not the Luſtre of your publick Merit, the Affluence of your Fortune, your high Figure in Life, nor thoſe honourable Diſtinctions, which you had rather deſerve than be told of, that have ſo many Years made my plain Heart hang after you: Theſe are but incidental Ornaments, that, 'tis true, may be of Service to you, in the World's Opinion; and though, as one among the Crowd, I may rejoice, that Providence has ſo deſervedly beſtow'd them; yet my particular Attachment has riſen from a meer natural, and more engaging Charm, The Agreeable Companion! Nor is my Vanity half ſo much gratified, in the *Honour*, as my Senſe is in the *Delight* of your Society! When I ſee you lay aſide the Advantages of Superiority, and by your own Chearfulneſs of Spirits, call out all that Nature has given me to meet them; then 'tis I taſte you! then Life runs high! I deſire! I poſſeſs you!

Yet,

Yet, Sir, in this diſtinguiſh'd Happineſs, I give not up my farther Share of that Pleaſure, or of that Right I have to look upon you, with the publick Eye, and to join in the general Regard ſo unanimouſly pay'd to that uncommon Virtue, your *Integrity!* This, Sir, the World allows ſo conſpicuous a Part of your Character, that, however invidious the Merit, neither the rude Licenſe of Detraction, nor the Prejudice of Party, has ever, once, thrown on it the leaſt Impeachment, or Reproach. This is that commanding Power, that in publick Speaking, makes you heard with ſuch Attention! This it is, that diſcourages, and keeps ſilent the Inſinuations of Prejudice, and Suſpicion; and almoſt renders your Eloquence an unneceſſary Aid, to your Aſſertions: Even your Opponents, conſcious of your *Integrity*, hear you rather as a Witneſs, than an Orator---- But this, Sir, is drawing you too near the Light, *Integrity* is too particular a Virtue to be cover'd with a general Application. Let me therefore only talk to you, as at *Tuſculum* (for ſo I will call that ſweet Retreat, which

your own Hands have rais'd) where like the fam'd Orator of old, when publick Cares permit, you paſs ſo many rational, unbending Hours: There! and at ſuch Times, to have been admitted, ſtill plays in my Memory, more like a fictitious, than a real Enjoyment! How many golden Evenings, in that Theatrical Paradiſe of water'd Lawns, and hanging Groves, have I walk'd, and prated down the Sun, in ſocial Happineſs! Whether the Retreat of *Cicero*, in Coſt, Magnificence, or curious Luxury of Antiquities, might not out-blaze the *ſimplex Munditiis*, the modeſt Ornaments of your *Villa*, is not within my reading to determine: But that the united Power of Nature, Art, or Elegance of Taſte, could have thrown ſo many varied Objects, into a more delightful Harmony, is beyond my Conception.

When I conſider you, in this View, and as the Gentleman of Eminence, ſurrounded with the general Benevolence of Mankind; I rejoice, Sir, for you, and for myſelf; to ſee *You*, in this particular Light of Merit, and myſelf, ſometimes,

times, admitted to my more than equal Share of you.

If this *Apology* for my paſt Life diſcourages you not, from holding me, in your uſual Favour, let me quit this greater Stage, the World, whenever I may, I ſhall think This the beſt-acted Part of any I have undertaken, ſince you firſt condeſcended to laugh with,

SIR,

Your moſt obedient,

moſt oblig'd, and

moſt humble Servant,

Novemb. 6.
1739.

COLLEY CIBBER.

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AN

AN

APOLOGY

FOR THE

LIFE *of Mr.* COLLEY CIBBER, *&c.*

CHAP. I.

The Introduction. The Author's Birth. Various Fortune at School. Not lik'd by thoſe he lov'd there. Why. A Digreſſion upon Raillery. The Uſe and Abuſe of it. The Comforts of Folly. Vanity of Greatneſs. Laughing, no bad Philoſophy.

YOU know, Sir, I have often told you, that one time or other I ſhould give the Publick ſome Memoirs of my own Life; at which you have never fail'd to laugh, like a Friend, without ſaying a word to diſſuade me from it; concluding, I ſuppoſe, that ſuch a wild Thought could not poſſibly require a ſerious Anſwer. But you ſee I was in earneſt. And now you will ſay, the World will find me, under my own Hand, a weaker Man than perhaps I may have paſs'd for, even among my Enemies. ------- With

all my Heart! my Enemies will then read me with Pleaſure, and you, perhaps, with Envy, when you find that Follies, without the Reproach of Guilt upon them, are not inconſiſtent with Happineſs. ----- But why make my Follies publick? Why not? I have paſs'd my Time very pleaſantly with them, and I don't recollect that they have ever been hurtful to any other Man living. Even admitting they were injudiciouſly choſen, would it not be Vanity in me to take Shame to myſelf for not being found a Wiſe Man? Really, Sir, my Appetites were in too much haſte to be happy, to throw away my Time in purſuit of a Name I was ſure I could never arrive at.

Now the Follies I frankly confeſs, I look upon as, in ſome meaſure, diſcharged; while thoſe I conceal are ſtill keeping the Account open between me and my Conſcience. To me the Fatigue of being upon a continual Guard to hide them, is more than the Reputation of being without them can repay. If this be Weakneſs, *defendit numerus*, I have ſuch comfortable Numbers on my ſide, that were all Men to bluſh, that are not Wiſe, I am afraid, in Ten, Nine Parts of the World ought to be out of Countenance: But ſince that ſort of Modeſty is what they don't care to come into, why ſhould I be afraid of being ſtar'd at, for not being particular? Or if the Particularity lies in owning my Weakneſs, will my wiſeſt Reader be ſo inhuman as not to pardon it? But if there ſhould be ſuch a one, let me, at leaſt, beg him to ſhew me that ſtrange Man, who is perfect! Is any one more unhappy, more ridiculous, than he who is always labouring to be thought ſo, or that is impatient, when he is not thought ſo? Having brought myſelf to be eaſy, under whatever the World may ſay of my Undertaking, you may ſtill ask me, why I give myſelf all this trouble? Is it for Fame, or Profit to myſelf, or Uſe or Delight to others? For all theſe Conſiderations I have neither Fondneſs nor Indifference: If I obtain none of them, the Amuſement, at worſt, will be a Reward

ward that muſt conſtantly go along with the Labour. But behind all this, there is ſomething inwardly inciting, which I can not expreſs in few Words; I muſt therefore a little make bold with your Patience.

A Man who has paſs'd above Forty Years of his Life upon a Theatre, where he has never appear'd to be Himſelf, may have naturally excited the Curioſity of his Spectators to know what he really was, when in no body's Shape but his own; and whether he, who by his Profeſſion had ſo long been ridiculing his Benefactors, might not, when the Coat of his Profeſſion was off, deſerve to be laugh'd at himſelf; or from his being often ſeen in, the moſt flagrant, and immoral Characters; whether he might not ſee as great a Rogue, when he look'd into the Glaſs himſelf, as when he held it to others.

It was, doubtleſs, from a Suppoſition that this ſort of Curioſity wou'd compenſate their Labours, that ſo many haſty Writers have been encourag'd to publiſh the Lives of the late Mrs. *Oldfield*, Mr. *Wilks*, and Mr. *Booth*, in leſs time after their Deaths than one cou'd ſuppoſe it coſt to tranſcribe them.

Now, Sir, when my Time comes, leſt they ſhou'd think it worth while to handle my Memory with the ſame Freedom, I am willing to prevent its being ſo odly beſmear'd (or at beſt but flatly white-waſh'd) by taking upon me to give the Publick This, as true a Picture of myſelf as natural Vanity will permit me to draw: For, to promiſe you that I ſhall never be vain, were a Promiſe that, like a Looking-glaſs too large, might break itſelf in the making: Nor am I ſure I ought wholly to avoid that Imputation, becauſe if Vanity be one of my natural Features, the Portrait wou'd not be like me without it. In a Word, I may palliate, and ſoften, as much as I pleaſe; but, upon an honeſt Examination of my Heart, I am afraid the ſame Vanity which makes even homely People employ Painters to preſerve a flattering Record of their Perſons, has ſeduced me to print off this *Chiaro Oſcuro* of my Mind.

And when I have done it, you may reaſonably ask me, of what Importance can the Hiſtory of my private Life be to the Publick? To this, indeed, I can only make you a ludicrous Anſwer, which is, That the Publick very well knows, my Life has not been a private one; that I have been employ'd in their Service, ever ſince many of their Grandfathers were young Men; And tho' I have voluntarily laid down my Poſt, they have a ſort of Right to enquire into my Conduct, (for which they have ſo well paid me) and to call for the Account of it, during my Share of Adminiſtration in the State of the Theatre. This Work, therefore, which, I hope, they will not expect a Man of my haſty Head ſhou'd confine to any regular Method: (For I ſhall make no ſcruple of leaving my Hiſtory, when I think a Digreſſion may make it lighter, for my Reader's Digeſtion.) This Work, I ſay, ſhall not only contain the various Impreſſions of my Mind, (as in *Louis the Fourteenth* his Cabinet you have ſeen the growing Medals of his Perſon from Infancy to Old Age,) but ſhall likewiſe include with them the *Theatrical Hiſtory of my Own Time*, from my firſt Appearance on the Stage to my laſt *Exit*.

If then what I ſhall advance on that Head, may any ways contribute to the Proſperity or Improvement of the Stage in being, the Publick muſt of conſequence have a Share in its Utility.

This, Sir, is the beſt Apology I can make for being my own Biographer. Give me leave therefore to open the firſt Scene of my Life, from the very Day I came into it; and tho' (conſidering my Profeſſion) I have no reaſon to be aſham'd of my Original; yet I am afraid a plain dry Account of it, will ſcarce admit of a better Excuſe than what my Brother *Bays* makes for Prince *Prettyman* in the *Rehearſal*, viz. *I only do it, for fear I ſhould be thought to be no body's Son at all*; for if I have led a worthleſs Life, the Weight of my Pedigree will not add an Ounce to my intrinſic Value. But be the Inference what it will, the ſimple Truth is this.

I was

I was born in *London*, on the 6th of *November* 1671, in *Southampton-Street*, facing *Southampton-Houſe*. My Father, *Caius Gabriel Cibber*, was a Native of *Holſtein*, who came into *England* ſome time before the Reſtoration of King *Charles* II. to follow his Profeſſion, which was that of a Statuary, *&c.* The *Baſſo Relievo* on the Pedeſtal of the Great Column in the City, and the two Figures of the *Lunaticks*, the *Raving* and the *Melancholy*, over the Gates of *Bethlehem-Hoſpital*, are no ill Monuments of his Fame as an Artiſt. My Mother was the Daughter of *William Colley*, Eſq; of a very ancient Family of *Glaiſton* in *Rutlandſhire*, where ſhe was born. My Mother's Brother, *Edward Colley*, Eſq; (who gave me my Chriſtian Name) being the laſt Heir Male of it, the Family is now extinct. I ſhall only add, that in *Wright*'s Hiſtory of *Rutlandſhire*, publiſh'd in 1684, the *Colley*'s are recorded as Sheriffs and Members of Parliament from the Reign of *Henry* VII. to the latter end of *Charles* I. in whoſe Cauſe chiefly Sir *Antony Colley*, my Mother's Grandfather, ſunk his Eſtate from Three Thouſand to about Three Hundred *per Annum*.

In the Year 1682, at little more than ten Years of Age, I was ſent to the Free-School of *Grantham* in *Lincolnſhire*, where I ſtaid till I got through it, from the loweſt Form to the uppermoſt. And ſuch Learning as that School could give me, is the moſt I pretend to (which, tho' I have not utterly forgot, I can not ſay I have much improv'd by Study) but even there I remember I was the ſame inconſiſtent Creature I have been ever ſince! always in full Spirits, in ſome ſmall Capacity to do right, but in a more frequent Alacrity to do wrong; and conſequently often under a worſe Character than I wholly deſerv'd: A giddy Negligence always poſſeſs'd me, and ſo much, that I remember I was once whip'd for my *Theme*, tho' my Maſter told me, at the ſame time, what was good of it was better than any Boy's in the Form. And (whatever Shame it may be to own it) I have obſerv'd the ſame odd Fate has frequently attended the courſe

courſe of my later Conduct in Life. The unskilful openneſs, or in plain Terms, the Indiſcretion I have always acted with from my Youth, has drawn more ill-will towards me, than Men of worſe Morals and more Wit might have met with. My Ignorance, and want of Jealouſy of Mankind has been ſo ſtrong, that it is with Reluctance I even yet believe any Perſon, I am acquainted with, can be capable of Envy, Malice, or Ingratitude: And to ſhew you what a Mortification it was to me, in my very boyiſh Days, to find my ſelf miſtaken, give me leave to tell you a School Story.

A great Boy, near the Head taller than my ſelf, in ſome wrangle at play had inſulted me; upon which I was fool-hardy enough to give him a Box on the Ear; the Blow was ſoon return'd with another, that brought me under him, and at his Mercy. Another Lad, whom I really lov'd, and thought a good-natur'd one, cry'd out with ſome warmth, to my Antagoniſt (while I was down) Beat him, beat him ſoundly! This ſo amaz'd me, that I loſt all my Spirits to reſiſt, and burſt into Tears! When the Fray was over I took my Friend aſide, and ask'd him, How he came to be ſo earneſtly againſt me? To which, with ſome glouting Confuſion, he reply'd, Becauſe you are always jeering, and making a Jeſt of me to every Boy in the School. Many a Miſchief have I brought upon my ſelf by the ſame Folly in riper Life. Whatever Reaſon I had to reproach my Companion's declaring againſt me, I had none to wonder at it, while I was ſo often hurting him: Thus I deſerv'd his Enmity, by my not having Senſe enough to know I *had* hurt him; and he hated me, becauſe he had not Senſe enough to know, that I never *intended* to hurt him.

As this is the firſt remarkable Error of my Life I can recollect, I cannot paſs it by without throwing out ſome farther Reflections upon it; whether flat or ſpirited, new or common, falſe or true, right or wrong, they will be ſtill my own, and conſequently like me; I will therefore boldly go on; for I am only oblig'd

oblig'd to give you my *own*, and not a *good* Picture, to ſhew as well the Weakneſs, as the Strength of my Underſtanding. It is not on what I write, but on my Reader's Curioſity I relie to be read through: At worſt, tho' the Impartial may be tir'd, the Ill-natur'd (no ſmall number) I know will ſee the bottom of me.

What I obſerv'd then, upon my having undeſignedly provok'd my School-Friend into an Enemy, is a common Caſe in Society; Errors of this kind often ſour the Blood of Acquaintance into an inconceivable Averſion, where it is little ſuſpected. It is not enough to ſay of your Raillery, that you intended no Offence; if the Perſon you offer it to has either a wrong Head, or wants a Capacity to make that diſtinction, it may have the ſame effect as the Intention of the groſſeſt Injury: And in reality, if you know his Parts are too ſlow to return it in kind, it is a vain and idle Inhumanity, and ſometimes draws the Aggreſſor into difficulties not eaſily got out of: Or to give the Caſe more ſcope, ſuppoſe your Friend may have a paſſive Indulgence for your Mirth, if you find him ſilent at it; tho' you were as intrepid as *Cæſar*, there can be no Excuſe for your not leaving it off. When you are conſcious that your Antagoniſt can give as well as take, then indeed the ſmarter the Hit the more agreeable the Party: A Man of chearful Senſe, among Friends will never be grave upon an Attack of this kind, but rather thank you that you have given him a Right to be even with you: There are few Men (tho' they may be Maſters of both) that on ſuch occaſions had not rather ſhew their Parts than their Courage, and the Preference is juſt; a Bull-Dog may have one, and only a Man can have the other. Thus it happens, that in the coarſe Merriment of common People, when the Jeſt begins to ſwell into earneſt; for want of this Election you may obſerve, he that has leaſt Wit generally gives the firſt Blow. Now, as among the better ſort, a readineſs of Wit is not always a Sign of intrinſick Merit; ſo the want of that readineſs is no Reproach to a Man of plain Senſe and Civility, who therefore (methinks) ſhould never have theſe

lengths

lengths of Liberty taken with him. Wit there becomes abſurd, if not inſolent; ill-natur'd I am ſure it is, which Imputation a generous Spirit will always avoid, for the ſame Reaſon that a Man of real Honour will never ſend a Challenge to a Cripple. The inward Wounds that are given by the inconſiderate Inſults of Wit, to thoſe that want it, are as dangerous as thoſe given by Oppreſſion to Inferiors; as long in healing, and perhaps never forgiven. There is beſides (and little worſe than this) a mutual Groſſneſs in Raillery, that ſometimes is more painful to the Hearers that are not concern'd in it, than to the Perſons engag'd. I have ſeen a couple of theſe clumſy Combatants drub one another with as little Manners or Mercy as if they had two Flails in their Hands; Children at play with Caſe-knives could not give you more Apprehenſion of their doing one another a Miſchief. And yet when the Conteſt has been over, the Boobys have look'd round them for Approbation, and upon being told they were admirably well match'd, have ſat down (bedawb'd as they were) contented, at making it a drawn Battle. After all that I have ſaid, there is no clearer way of giving Rules for Raillery than by Example.

There are two Perſons now living, who tho' very different in their manner, are, as far as my Judgment reaches, complete Maſters of it; the one of a more polite and extenſive Imagination, the other of a Knowledge more cloſely uſeful to the Buſineſs of Life: The one gives you perpetual Pleaſure, and ſeems always to be taking it; the other ſeems to take none, till his Buſineſs is over, and then gives you as much as if Pleaſure were his only Buſineſs. The one enjoys his Fortune, the other thinks it firſt neceſſary to make it; though that he will enjoy it then, I cannot be poſitive, becauſe when a Man has once pick'd up more than he wants, he is apt to think it a Weakneſs to ſuppoſe he has enough. But as I don't remember ever to have ſeen theſe Gentlemen in the ſame Company, you muſt give me leave to take them ſeparately.

The

The firſt of them, then, has a Title, and--- no matter what; I am not to ſpeak of the great, but the happy part of his Character, and in this one ſingle light; not of his being an illuſtrious, but a delightful Companion.

In Converſation he is ſeldom ſilent but when he is attentive, nor ever ſpeaks without exciting the Attention of others; and tho' no Man might with leſs diſpleaſure to his Hearers, engroſs the Talk of the Company, he has a Patience in his Vivacity that chuſes to divide it, and rather gives more Freedom than he takes; his ſharpeſt Replies having a mixture of Politeneſs that few have the command of; his Expreſſion is eaſy, ſhort, and clear; a ſtiff or ſtudy'd Word never comes from him; it is in a ſimplicity of Style that he gives the higheſt Surprize, and his Ideas are always adapted to the Capacity and Taſte of the Perſon he ſpeaks to: Perhaps you will underſtand me better if I give you a particular Inſtance of it. A Perſon at the Univerſity, who from being a Man of Wit, eaſily became one of his Acquaintance there, from that Acquaintance found no difficulty in being made one of his Chaplains: This Perſon afterwards leading a Life that did no great Honour to his Cloth, oblig'd his Patron to take ſome gentle notice of it; but as his Patron knew the Patient was ſqueamiſh, he was induc'd to ſweeten the Medicine to his Taſte, and therefore with a ſmile of good-humour told him, that if to the many Vices he had already, he would give himſelf the trouble to add one more, he did not doubt but his Reputation might ſtill be ſet up again. Sir *Crape*, who could have no Averſion to ſo pleaſant a Doſe, deſiring to know what it might be, was anſwered, *Hypocriſy*, *Doctor*, *only a little Hypocriſy!* This plain Reply can need no Comment; but *ex pede Herculem*, he is every where proportionable. I think I have heard him ſince ſay, the Doctor thought Hypocriſy ſo deteſtable a Sin that he dy'd without committing it. In a word, this Gentleman gives Spirit to Society the Moment he comes into it, and whenever he leaves it, they who have Buſineſs have then leiſure to go about it.

Having often had the Honour to be my ſelf the Butt of his Raillery, I muſt own I have receiv'd more Pleaſure from his lively manner of raiſing the Laugh againſt me, than I could have felt from the ſmootheſt flattery of a ſerious Civility. Tho' Wit flows from him with as much eaſe as common Senſe from another, he is ſo little elated with the Advantage he may have over you, that whenever your good Fortune gives it againſt him, he ſeems more pleas'd with it on your ſide than his own. The only advantage he makes of his Superiority of Rank is, that by always waving it himſelf, his inferior finds he is under the greater Obligation not to forget it.

When the Conduct of ſocial Wit is under ſuch Regulations, how delightful muſt thoſe *Convivia*, thoſe Meals of Converſation be, where ſuch a Member preſides; who can with ſo much eaſe (as *Shakeſpear* phraſes it) *ſet the Table in a roar*. I am in no pain that theſe imperfect Out-lines will be apply'd to the Perſon I mean, becauſe every one that has the Happineſs to know him, muſt know how much more in this particular Attitude is wanting to be like him.

The other Gentleman, whoſe bare Interjections of Laughter have Humour in them, is ſo far from having a Title, that he has loſt his real name, which ſome Years ago he ſuffer'd his Friends to railly him out of; in lieu of which they have equipp'd him with one they thought had a better ſound in good Company. He is the firſt Man of ſo ſociable a Spirit, that I ever knew capable of quitting the Allurements of Wit and Pleaſure, for a ſtrong Application to Buſineſs; in his Youth (for there was a Time when he was young) he ſet out in all the hey-day Expences of a modiſh Man of Fortune; but finding himſelf over-weighted with Appetites, he grew reſtiff, kick'd up in the middle of the Courſe, and turn'd his Back upon his Frolicks abroad, to think of improving his Eſtate at home: In order to which he clapt Collars upon his Coach-horſes, and that their Mettle might not run over other People, he ty'd a Plough to their Tails, which tho'

tho' it might give them a more ſlovenly Air, would enable him to keep them fatter in a foot pace, with a whiſtling Peaſant beſide them, than in a full trot, with a hot-headed Coachman behind them. In theſe unpolite Amuſements he has laugh'd like a Rake, and look'd about him like a Farmer for many Years. As his Rank and Station often find him in the beſt Company, his eaſy Humour, whenever he is called to it, can ſtill make himſelf the Fiddle of it.

And tho' ſome ſay, he looks upon the Follies of the World like too ſevere a Philoſopher, yet he rather chuſes to laugh, than to grieve at them; to paſs his time therefore more eaſily in it, he often endeavours to conceal himſelf, by aſſuming the Air and Taſte of a Man in faſhion; ſo that his only Uneaſineſs ſeems to be, that he can't quite prevail with his Friends to think him a worſe Manager, than he really is; for they carry their Raillery to ſuch a height, that it ſometimes riſes to a Charge of downright Avarice againſt him. Upon which head it is no eaſy matter to be more merry upon him, than he will be upon himſelf. Thus while he ſets that Infirmity in a pleaſant Light, he ſo diſarms your Prejudice that, if he has it not, you can't find in your Heart to wiſh he were without it. Whenever he is attack'd where he ſeems to lie ſo open, if his Wit happens not to be ready for you, he receives you with an aſſenting Laugh, till he has gain'd time to whet it ſharp enough for a Reply, which ſeldom turns out to his diſadvantage. If you are too ſtrong for him (which may poſſibly happen from his being oblig'd to defend the weak ſide of the Queſtion) his laſt Reſource is to join in the Laugh, till he has got himſelf off by an ironical Applauſe of your Superiority.

If I were capable of Envy, what I have obſerv'd of this Gentleman would certainly incline me to it; for ſure to get through the neceſſary Cares of Life, with a Train of Pleaſures at our Heels, in vain calling after us, to give a conſtant Preference to the Buſineſs of the Day, and yet be able to laugh while we are about it, to make even Society the ſubſervient Reward of it, is a

State of Happineſs which the graveſt Precepts of moral Wiſdom will not eaſily teach us to exceed. When I ſpeak of Happineſs, I go no higher than that which is contain'd in the World we now tread upon; and when I ſpeak of Laughter, I don't ſimply mean that which every Oaf is capable of, but that which has its ſenſible Motive and proper Seaſon, which is not more limited than recommended by that indulgent Philoſophy,

Cum ratione inſanire.

When I look into my preſent Self, and afterwards caſt my Eye round all my Hopes, I don't ſee any one Purſuit of them that ſhou'd ſo reaſonably rouze me out of a Nod in my Great Chair, as a call to thoſe agreeable Parties I have ſometimes the Happineſs to mix with, where I always aſſert the equal Liberty of leaving them, when my Spirits have done their beſt with them.

Now, Sir, as I have been making my way for above Forty Years through a Crowd of Cares, (all which, by the Favour of Providence, I have honeſtly got rid of) is it a time of Day for me to leave off theſe Fooleries, and to ſet up a new Character? Can it be worth my while to waſte my Spirits, to bake my Blood, with ſerious Contemplations, and perhaps impair my Health, in the fruitleſs Study of advancing myſelf into the better Opinion of thoſe very --- very few Wiſe Men that are as old as I am? No, the Part I have acted in real Life, ſhall be all of a piece.

------ *Servetur ad imum,*
Qualis ab incepto proceſſerit. Hor.

I will not go out of my Character, by ſtraining to be wiſer than I *can* be, or by being more affectedly penſive than I *need* be; whatever I am, Men of Senſe will know me to be, put on what Diſguiſe I will; I can no more put off my Follies, than my Skin; I have often try'd, but they ſtick too cloſe to me; nor am I ſure my Friends are diſpleas'd with them; for, beſides that in this Light I afford them frequent matter of Mirth, they may poſſibly be leſs uneaſy at their *own* Foibles, when they have ſo old a Precedent

cedent to keep them in countenance: Nay, there are ſome frank enough to confeſs, they envy what they laugh at; and when I have ſeen others, whoſe Rank and fortune have laid a ſort of Reſtraint upon their Liberty of pleaſing their Company, by pleaſing themſelves, I have ſaid ſoftly to myſelf, ------ Well, there is ſome Advantage in having neither Rank nor Fortune! Not but there are among them a third Sort, who have the particular Happineſs of unbending into the very Wantonneſs of Good-humour, without depreciating their Dignity: He that is not Maſter of that Freedom, let his Condition be never ſo exalted, muſt ſtill want ſomething to come up to the Happineſs of his Inferiors who enjoy it. If *Socrates* cou'd take pleaſure in playing at *Even or Odd* with his Children, or *Ageſilaus* divert himſelf in riding the Hobby-horſe with them, am I oblig'd to be as eminent as either of them before I am as frolickſome? If the Emperor *Adrian*, near his death, cou'd play with his very Soul, his *Animula*, &c. and regret that it cou'd be no longer companionable; if Greatneſs, at the ſame time, was not the Delight he was ſo loth to part with, ſure then theſe chearful Amuſements I am contending for, muſt have no inconſiderable ſhare in our Happineſs; he that does not chuſe to live his own way, ſuffers others to chuſe for him. Give me the Joy I always took in the End of an old Song,

My Mind, my Mind is a Kingdom to me!

If I can pleaſe myſelf with my own Follies, have not I a plentiful Proviſion for Life? If the World thinks me a Trifler, I don't deſire to break in upon their Wiſdom; let them call me any Fool, but an Unchearful one! I live as I write; while my Way amuſes me, it's as well as I wiſh it; when another writes better, I can like him too, tho' he ſhou'd not like me. Not our great Imitator of *Horace* himſelf can have more Pleaſure in writing his Verſes, than I have in reading them, tho' I ſometimes find myſelf there (as *Shakeſpear* terms it) *diſpraiſingly* ſpoken of: If he is a little free with me, I am generally in good company,

pany, he is as blunt with my Betters; ſo that even here I might laugh in my turn. My Superiors, perhaps, may be mended by him; but, for my part, I own myſelf incorrigible: I look upon my Follies as the beſt part of my Fortune, and am more concern'd to be a good Husband of Them, than of That; nor do I believe I ſhall ever be rhim'd out of them. And, if I don't miſtake, I am ſupported in my way of thinking by *Horace* himſelf, who, in excuſe of a looſe Writer, ſays,

Prætulerim ſcriptor delirus, inerſque videri,
Dum mea delectent, mala me, aut denique fallant,
Quam ſapere, et ringi ----

which, to ſpeak of myſelf as a looſe Philoſopher, I have thus ventur'd to imitate:

Me, while my laughing Follies can deceive,
Bleſt in the dear Delirium let me live,
Rather than wiſely know my Wants, and grieve.

We had once a merry Monarch of our own, who thought chearfulneſs ſo valuable a Bleſſing, that he would have quitted one of his Kingdoms where he cou'd not enjoy it; where, among many other hard Conditions they had ty'd him to, his ſober Subjects wou'd not ſuffer him to laugh on a *Sunday*; and tho' this might not be the avow'd Cauſe of his Elopement, I am not ſure, had he had no other, that this alone might not have ſerv'd his turn; at leaſt, he has my hearty Approbation either way; for had I been under the ſame Reſtriction, tho' my ſtaying were to have made me his Succeſſor, I ſhou'd rather have choſen to follow him.

How far his Subjects might be in the right, is not my Affair to determine; perhaps they were wiſer than the Frogs in the Fable, and rather choſe to have a Log, than a Stork for their King; yet I hope it will be no Offence to ſay, that King *Log* himſelf muſt have made but a very ſimple Figure in Hiſtory.

The Man who chuſes never to laugh, or whoſe becalm'd Paſſions know no Motion, ſeems to me only in the quiet State of a green

a green Tree; he vegetates, 'tis true, but ſhall we ſay he lives? Now, Sir, for Amuſement. ---- Reader, take heed! for I find a ſtrong impulſe to talk impertinently; if therefore you are not as fond of ſeeing, as I am of ſhewing myſelf in all my Lights, you may turn over two Leaves together, and leave what follows to thoſe who have more Curioſity, and leſs to do with their Time, than you have. ----- As I was ſaying then, let us, for Amuſement, advance this, or any other Prince, to the moſt glorious Throne, mark out his Empire in what Clime you pleaſe, fix him on the higheſt Pinnacle of unbounded Power; and in that State let us enquire into his degree of Happineſs; make him at once the Terror and the Envy of his Neighbours, ſend his Ambition out to War, and gratify it with extended Fame and Victories; bring him in triumph home, with great unhappy Captives behind him, through the Acclamations of his People, to repoſſeſs his Realms in Peace. Well, when the Duſt has been bruſht from his Purple, what will he do next? Why, this envy'd Monarch (who, we will allow to have a more exalted Mind than to be delighted with the trifling Flatteries of a congratulating Circle) will chuſe to retire, I preſume, to enjoy in private the Contemplation of his Glory; an Amuſement, you will ſay, that well becomes his Station! But there, in that pleaſing Rumination, when he has made up his new Account of Happineſs, how much, pray, will be added to the Balance more than as it ſtood before his laſt Expedition? From what one Article will the Improvement of it appear? Will it ariſe from the conſcious Pride of having done his weaker Enemy an Injury? Are his Eyes ſo dazzled with falſe Glory, that he thinks it a leſs Crime in him to break into the Palace of his Princely Neighbour, becauſe he gave him time to defend it, than for a Subject feloniouſly to plunder the Houſe of a private Man? Or is the Outrage of Hunger and Neceſſity more enormous than the Ravage of Ambition? Let us even ſuppoſe the wicked Uſage of the World, as to that Point, may keep his Conſcience quiet; ſtill,

what

what is he to do with the infinite Spoil that his imperial Rapine has brought home? Is he to ſit down, and vainly deck himſelf with the Jewels which he has plunder'd from the Crown of another, whom Self-defence had compell'd to oppoſe him? No, let us not debaſe his Glory into ſo low a Weakneſs. What Appetite, then, are theſe ſhining Treaſures food for? Is their vaſt Value in ſeeing his vulgar Subjects ſtare at them, wiſe Men ſmile at them, or his Children play with them? Or can the new Extent of his Dominions add a Cubit to his Happineſs? Was not his Empire wide enough before to do good in? And can it add to his Delight that now no Monarch has ſuch room to do miſchief in? But farther; if even the great *Auguſtus*, to whoſe Reign ſuch Praiſes are given, cou'd not enjoy his Days of Peace, free from the Terrors of repeated Conſpiracies, which loſt him more Quiet to ſuppreſs, than his Ambition coſt him to provoke them. What human Eminence is ſecure? In what private Cabinet then muſt this wondrous Monarch lock up his Happineſs, that common Eyes are never to behold it? Is it, like his Perſon, a Priſoner to its own Superiority? Or does he at laſt poorly place it in the Triumph of his injurious Devaſtations? One Moment's Search into himſelf will plainly ſhew him, that real and reaſonable Happineſs can have no Exiſtence without Innocence and Liberty. What a Mockery is Greatneſs without them? How loneſome muſt be the Life of that Monarch, who, while he governs only by being fear'd, is reſtrain'd from letting down his Grandeur ſometimes to forget himſelf, and to humanize him into the Benevolence and Joy of Society? To throw off his cumberſome Robe of Majeſty to be a Man without Diſguiſe, to have a ſenſible Taſte of Life in its Simplicity, till he confeſs, from the ſweet Experience, that *dulce eſt deſipere in loco*, was no Fool's Philoſophy. Or if the gawdy Charms of Pre-eminence are ſo ſtrong that they leave him no Senſe of a leſs pompous, tho' a more rational Enjoyment, none ſure can envy him, but thoſe who are the Dupes of an equally fantaſtick Ambition.

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My Imagination is quite heated and fatigued, in dreſſing up this Phantome of Felicity; but I hope it has not made me ſo far miſunderſtood, as not to have allow'd, that in all the Diſpenſations of Providence, the Exerciſe of a great and virtuous Mind is the moſt elevated State of Happineſs: No, Sir, I am not for ſetting up Gaiety againſt Wiſdom; nor for preferring the Man of Pleaſure to the Philoſopher; but for ſhewing, that the Wiſeſt, or Greateſt Man, is very near an unhappy Man, if the unbending Amuſements I am contending for, are not ſometimes admitted to relieve him.

How far I may have over-rated theſe Amuſements, let graver Caſuiſts decide; whether they affirm, or reject, what I have aſſerted, hurts not my Purpoſe; which is not to give Laws to others; but to ſhew by what Laws I govern myſelf: If I am miſguided, 'tis Nature's Fault, and I follow her, from this Perſuaſion; That as Nature has diſtinguiſh'd our Species from the mute Creation, by our Riſibility, her Deſign muſt have been, by that Faculty, as evidently to raiſe our Happineſs, as by our *Os Sublime* (our erected Faces) to lift the Dignity of our Form above them.

Notwithſtanding all I have ſaid, I am afraid there is an abſolute Power, in what is ſimply call'd our Conſtitution, that will never admit of other Rules for Happineſs, than her own; from which (be we never ſo wiſe or weak) without Divine Aſſiſtance, we only can receive it: So that all this my Parade, and Grimace of Philoſophy, has been only making a mighty Merit of following my own Inclination. A very natural Vanity! Though it is ſome ſort of Satisfaction to know it does not impoſe upon me. Vanity again! However, think It what you will that has drawn me into this copious Digreſſion, 'tis now high time to drop it: I ſhall therefore in my next Chapter return to my School, from whence, I fear, I have too long been Truant.

CHAP. II.

He that writes of himſelf, not eaſily tir'd. Boys may give Men Leſſons. The Author's Preferment at School attended with Misfortunes. The Danger of Merit among Equals. Of Satyriſts and Backbiters. What effect they have had upon the Author. Stanzas publiſh'd by himſelf againſt himſelf.

IT often makes me ſmile, to think how contentedly I have ſate myſelf down, to write my own Life; nay, and with leſs Concern for what may be ſaid of it, than I ſhould feel, were I to do the ſame for a deceas'd Acquaintance. This you will eaſily account for, when you conſider, that nothing gives a Coxcomb more Delight, than when you ſuffer him to talk of himſelf; which ſweet Liberty I here enjoy for a whole Volume together! A Privilege, which neither cou'd be allow'd me, nor wou'd become me to take, in the Company I am generally admitted to; but here, where I have all the Talk to myſelf, and have no body to interrupt or contradict me, ſure, to ſay whatever I have a mind other People ſhou'd know of me, is a Pleaſure which none but Authors, as vain as myſelf, can conceive. -- But to my Hiſtory.

However little worth notice the Life of a School-boy may be ſuppos'd to contain; yet, as the Paſſions of Men and Children have much the ſame Motives, and differ very little in their Effects, unleſs where the elder Experience may be able to conceal them: As therefore what ariſes from the Boy, may poſſibly be a Leſſon to the Man, I ſhall venture to relate a Fact, or two, that happen'd while I was ſtill at School.

In *February*, 1684-5, died King *Charles* II. who being the only King I had ever ſeen, I remember (young as I was) his Death made a ſtrong Impreſſion upon me, as it drew Tears from the

the Eyes of Multitudes, who look'd no further into him than I did: But it was, then, a ſort of School-Doctrine to regard our Monarch as a Deity; as in the former Reign it was to inſiſt he was accountable to this World, as well as to that above him. But what, perhaps, gave King *Charles* II. this peculiar Poſſeſſion of ſo many Hearts, was his affable and eaſy manner in converſing; a Quality that goes farther with the greater Part of Mankind than many higher Virtues, which, in a Prince, might more immediately regard the publick Proſperity. Even his indolent Amuſement of playing with his Dogs, and feeding his Ducks, in St. *James*'s *Park*, (which I have ſeen him do) made the common People adore him, and conſequently overlook in him, what, in a Prince of a different Temper, they might have been out of humour at.

I cannot help remembring one more Particular in thoſe Times, tho' it be quite foreign to what will follow. I was carry'd by my Father to the Chapel in *Whitehall*; where I ſaw the King, and his royal Brother the then Duke of *York*, with him in the Cloſet, and preſent during the whole Divine Service. Such Diſpenſation, it ſeems, for his Intereſt, had that unhappy Prince, from his real Religion, to aſſiſt at another, to which his Heart was ſo utterly averſe.---- I now proceed to the Facts I promis'd to ſpeak of.

King *Charles* his Death was judg'd, by our School-maſter, a proper Subject to lead the Form I was in, into a higher kind of Exerciſe; he therefore enjoin'd us, ſeverally, to make his Funeral Oration: This ſort of Task, ſo entirely new to us all, the Boys receiv'd with Aſtoniſhment, as a Work above their Capacity; and tho' the Maſter perſiſted in his Command, they one and all, except myſelf, reſolv'd to decline it. But I, Sir, who was ever giddily forward, and thoughtleſs of Conſequences, ſet myſelf roundly to work, and got through it as well as I could. I remember to this Hour, that ſingle Topick of his Affability (which made me mention it before) was the chief Motive that

warm'd me into the Undertaking; and to ſhew how very childiſh a Notion I had of his Character at that time, I rais'd his Humanity, and Love of thoſe who ſerv'd him, to ſuch height, that I imputed his Death to the Shock he receiv'd from the Lord *Arlington*'s being at the point of Death, about a Week before him. This Oration, ſuch as it was, I produc'd the next Morning: All the other Boys pleaded their Inability, which the Maſter taking rather as a mark of their Modeſty than their Idleneſs, only ſeem'd to puniſh, by ſetting me at the Head of the Form: A Preferment dearly bought! Much happier had I been to have ſunk my Performance in the general Modeſty of declining it. A moſt uncomfortable Life I led among 'em, for many a Day after! I was ſo jeer'd, laugh'd at, and hated as a pragmatical Baſtard (School-boys Language) who had betray'd the whole Form, that ſcarce any of 'em wou'd keep me company; and tho' it ſo far advanc'd me into the Maſter's Favour, that he wou'd often take me from the School, to give me an Airing with him on Horſeback, while they were left to their Leſſons; you may be ſure, ſuch envy'd Happineſs did not encreaſe their Good-will to me: Notwithſtanding which, my Stupidity cou'd take no warning from their Treatment. An Accident of the ſame nature happen'd ſoon after, that might have frighten'd a Boy of a meek Spirit, from attempting any thing above the loweſt Capacity. On the 23d of *April* following, being the Coronation-Day of the new King, the School petition'd the Maſter for leave to play; to which he agreed, provided any of the Boys wou'd produce an *Engliſh* Ode upon that Occaſion. ------ The very Word, *Ode*, I know, makes you ſmile already; and ſo it does me; not only becauſe it ſtill makes ſo many poor Devils turn Wits upon it, but from a more agreeable Motive; from a Reflexion of how little I then thought that, half a Century afterwards, I ſhou'd be call'd upon twice a Year, by my Poſt, to make the ſame kind of Oblations to an *unexceptionable* Prince, the ſerene Happineſs of whoſe Reign my halting Rhimes are ſtill ſo unequal to---This, I own,

I own, is Vanity without Diſguiſe; but, *Hæc olim meminiſſe juvat:* The remembrance of the miſerable Proſpect we had then before us, and have ſince eſcap'd by a Revolution, is now a Pleaſure, which, without that Remembrance, I cou'd not ſo heartily have enjoy'd. The Ode I was ſpeaking of fell to my Lot, which, in about half an Hour I produc'd. I cannot ſay it was much above the merry Style of *Sing! Sing the Day, and ſing the Song*, in the Farce: Yet, bad as it was, it ſerv'd to get the School a Play-day, and to make me not a little vain upon it; which laſt Effect ſo diſguſted my Play-fellows, that they left me out of the Party I had moſt mind to be of, in that Day's Recreation. But their Ingratitude ſerv'd only to increaſe my Vanity; for I conſider'd them as ſo many beaten Tits, that had juſt had the Mortification of ſeeing my Hack of a *Pegaſus* come in before them. This low Paſſion is ſo rooted in our Nature, that ſometimes riper Heads cannot govern it. I have met with much the ſame ſilly ſort of Coldneſs, even from my Cotemporaries of the Theatre, from having the ſuperfluous Capacity of writing myſelf the Characters I have acted.

Here, perhaps, I may again ſeem to be vain; but if all theſe Facts are true (as true they are) how can I help it? Why am I oblig'd to conceal them? The Merit of the beſt of them is not ſo extraordinary as to have warn'd me to be nice upon it; and the Praiſe due to them is ſo ſmall a Fiſh, it was ſcarce worth while to throw my Line into the Water for it. If I confeſs my Vanity while a Boy, can it be Vanity, when a Man, to remember it? And if I have a tolerable Feature, will not that as much belong to my Picture, as an Imperfection? In a word, from what I have mentioned, I wou'd obſerve only this; That when we are conſcious of the leaſt comparative Merit in ourſelves, we ſhou'd take as much care to conceal the Value we ſet upon it, as if it were a real Defect: To be elated, or vain upon it, is ſhewing your Mony before People in want; ten to one, but ſome who may think you have too much, may borrow, or pick

your

your Pocket before you get home. He who aſſumes Praiſe to himſelf, the World will think overpays himſelf. Even the Suſpicion of being vain, ought as much to be dreaded as the Guilt itſelf. *Cæſar* was of the ſame Opinion, in regard to his Wife's Chaſtity. Praiſe, tho' it may be our due, is not like a *Bank-Bill*, to be paid upon Demand; to be valuable, it muſt be voluntary. When we are dun'd for it, we have a Right and Privilege to refuſe it. If Compulſion inſiſts upon it, it can only be paid as Perſecution in Points of Faith is, in a counterfeit Coin: And who, ever, believ'd Occaſional Conformity to be ſincere? *Nero*, the moſt vain Coxcomb of a Tyrant that ever breath'd, cou'd not raiſe an unfeigned Applauſe to his Harp by military Execution: Even where Praiſe is deſerv'd, Ill-nature and Self-conceit (Paſſions, that poll a majority of Mankind) will with leſs reluctance part with their Mony, than their Approbation. Men of the greateſt Merit are forc'd to ſtay 'till they die, before the World will fairly make up their Account: Then, indeed, you have a Chance for your full Due, becauſe it is leſs grudg'd when you are incapable of enjoying it: Then, perhaps, even Malice ſhall heap Praiſes upon your Memory; tho' not for your ſake, but that your ſurviving Competitors may ſuffer by a Compariſon. 'Tis from the ſame Principle that *Satyr* ſhall have a thouſand Readers, where *Panegyric* has one. When I therefore find my Name at length, in the Satyrical Works of our moſt celebrated living Author, I never look upon thoſe Lines as Malice meant to me, (for he knows I never provok'd it) but Profit to himſelf: One of his Points muſt be, to have many Readers: He conſiders that my Face and Name are more known than thoſe of many thouſands of more conſequence in the Kingdom: That therefore, right or wrong, a Lick at the *Laureat* will always be a ſure Bait, *ad captandum vulgus*, to catch him little Readers: And that to gratify the Unlearned, by now and then interſperſing thoſe merry Sacrifices of an old Acquaintance to their Taſte, is a piece of quite right Poetical Craft.

But

But as a little bad Poetry, is the greateſt Crime he lays to my charge, I am willing to ſubſcribe to his opinion of *it*. That this ſort of Wit is one of the eaſieſt ways too, of pleaſing the generality of Readers, is evident from the comfortable Subſiſtance which our weekly Retailers of Politicks have been known to pick up, merely by making bold with a Government that had unfortunately neglected to find their Genius a better Employment.

Hence too ariſes all that flat Poverty of Cenſure and Invective, that ſo often has a Run in our publick Papers, upon the Succeſs of a new Author; when, God knows, there is ſeldom above one Writer among hundreds in being at the ſame time, whoſe Satyr a Man of common Senſe ought to be mov'd at. When a Maſter in the Art is angry, then, indeed, we ought to be alarm'd! How terrible a Weapon is Satyr in the Hand of a great Genius? Yet even there, how liable is Prejudice to miſuſe it? How far, when general, it may reform our Morals, or what Cruelties it may inflict by being angrily particular, is perhaps above my reach to determine. I ſhall therefore only beg leave to interpoſe what I feel for others, whom it may perſonally have fallen upon. When I read thoſe mortifying Lines of our moſt eminent Author, in his Character of *Atticus* (*Atticus*, whoſe Genius in Verſe, and whoſe Morality in Proſe, has been ſo juſtly admir'd) though I am charm'd with the Poetry, my Imagination is hurt at the Severity of it; and tho' I allow the Satyriſt to have had perſonal Provocation, yet, methinks, for that very Reaſon, he ought not to have troubled the Publick with it: For, as it is obſerv'd in the 242d *Tattler*, "In all Terms of Reproof, where the Sentence "appears to ariſe from Perſonal Hatred, or Paſſion, it is not then "made the Cauſe of Mankind, but a Miſunderſtanding between "two Perſons." But if ſuch kind of Satyr has its inconteſtable Greatneſs; if its exemplary Brightneſs may not miſlead inferior Wits into a barbarous Imitation of its Severity, then I have only admir'd the Verſes, and expos'd myſelf, by bringing them under

der ſo ſcrupulous a Reflexion: But the Pain which the Acrimony of thoſe Verſes gave me, is, in ſome meaſure, allay'd, in finding that this inimitable Writer, as he advances in Years, has ſince had Candour enough to celebrate the ſame Perſon for his viſible Merit. Happy Genius! whoſe Verſe, like the Eye of Beauty, can heal the deepeſt Wounds with the leaſt Glance of Favour.

Since I am got ſo far into this Subject, you muſt give me leave to go thro' all I have a mind to ſay upon it; becauſe I am not ſure, that in a more proper Place, my Memory may be ſo full of it. I cannot find, therefore, from what Reaſon, Satyr is allow'd more Licence than Comedy, or why either of them (to be admir'd) ought not to be limited by Decency and Juſtice. Let *Juvenal* and *Ariſtophanes* have taken what Liberties they pleaſe, if the Learned have nothing more than their Antiquity to juſtify their laying about them, at that enormous rate, I ſhall wiſh they had a better Excuſe for them! The Perſonal Ridicule and Scurrility thrown upon *Socrates*, which *Plutarch* too condemns; and the Boldneſs of *Juvenal*, in writing real Names over guilty Characters, I cannot think are to be pleaded in right of our modern Liberties of the ſame kind. *Facit indignatio verſum*, may be a very ſpirited Expreſſion, and ſeems to give a Reader hopes of a lively Entertainment: But I am afraid Reproof is in unequal Hands, when Anger is its Executioner; and tho' an outrageous Invective may carry ſome Truth in it, yet it will never have that natural, eaſy Credit with us, which we give to the laughing Ironies of a cool Head. The Satyr that can ſmile *circum præcordia ludit*, and ſeldom fails to bring the Reader quite over to his Side, whenever Ridicule and Folly are at variance. But when a Perſon ſatyriz'd is us'd with the extremeſt Rigour, he may ſometimes meet with Compaſſion, inſtead of Contempt, and throw back the Odium that was deſign'd for him, upon the Author. When I would therefore diſarm the Satyriſt of this Indignation, I mean little more, than that I wou'd take from him all private or perſonal Prejudice, and wou'd ſtill leave

leave him as much general Vice to ſcourge as he pleaſes, and that with as much Fire and Spirit as Art and Nature demand to enliven his Work, and keep his Reader awake.

Againſt all this it may be objected, That theſe are Laws which none but phlegmatick Writers will obſerve, and only Men of Eminence ſhould give. I grant it, and therefore only ſubmit them to Writers of better Judgment. I pretend not to reſtrain others from chuſing what I don't like; they are welcome (if they pleaſe too) to think I offer theſe Rules, more from an Incapacity to break them, than from a moral Humanity. Let it be ſo! ſtill, That will not weaken the ſtrength of what I have aſſerted, if my Aſſertion be true. And though I allow, that Provocation is not apt to weigh out its Reſentments by Drachms and Scruples, I ſhall ſtill think, that no publick Revenge can be honourable, where it is not limited by Juſtice; and, if Honour is inſatiable in its Revenge, it loſes what it contends for, and ſinks itſelf, if not into Cruelty, at leaſt into Vain-glory.

This ſo ſingular Concern which I have ſhewn for others, may naturally lead you to ask me, what I feel for myſelf, when I am unfavourably treated by the elaborate Authors of our daily Papers. Shall I be ſincere? and own my Frailty? Its uſual Effect is to make me vain! For I conſider, if I were quite good for nothing, theſe Pidlers in Wit would not be concern'd to take me to pieces, or (not to be quite ſo vain) when they moderately charge me with only Ignorance, or Dulneſs, I ſee nothing in That which an honeſt Man need be aſham'd of: There is many a good Soul, who, from thoſe ſweet Slumbers of the Brain, are never awaken'd by the leaſt harmful Thought; and I am ſometimes tempted to think thoſe Retailers of Wit may be of the ſame Claſs; that what they write proceeds not from Malice, but Induſtry; and that I ought no more to reproach them, than I would a Lawyer that pleads againſt me for his Fee; that their Detraction, like Dung, thrown upon a Meadow, tho' it may ſeem at firſt to

deform the Proſpect, in a little time it will diſappear of itſelf, and leave an involuntary Crop of Praiſe behind it.

When they confine themſelves to a ſober Criticiſm upon what I write; if their Cenſure is juſt, what Anſwer can I make to it? If it is unjuſt, why ſhould I ſuppoſe that a ſenſible Reader will not ſee it, as well as myſelf? Or, admit I were able to expoſe them, by a laughing Reply, will not that Reply beget a Rejoinder? And though they might be Gainers, by having the worſt on't, in a Paper War, that is no Temptation for me to come into it. Or (to make both ſides leſs conſiderable) would not my bearing Ill-language, from a Chimney-ſweeper, do me leſs harm, than it would be to box with him, tho' I were ſure to beat him? Nor indeed is the little Reputation I have, as an Author, worth the trouble of a Defence. Then, as no Criticiſm can poſſibly make me worſe than I really am; ſo nothing I ſay of myſelf can poſſibly make me better: When therefore a determin'd Critick comes arm'd with Wit and Outrage, to take from me that ſmall Pittance I have, I would no more diſpute with him, than I wou'd reſiſt a Gentleman of the Road, to ſave a little Pocket-Money. Men that are in want themſelves, ſeldom make a Conſcience of taking it from others. Whoever thinks I have too much, is welcome to what ſhare of it he pleaſes: Nay, to make him more merciful (as I partly gueſs the worſt he can ſay of what I now write) I will prevent even the Imputation of his doing me Injuſtice, and honeſtly ſay it myſelf, *viz.* That of all the Aſſurances I was ever guilty of, this, of writing my own Life, is the moſt hardy. I beg his Pardon!---Impudent is what I ſhou'd have ſaid! That thro' every Page there runs a Vein of Vanity and Impertinence, which no *French Enſigns memoires* ever came up to; but, as this is a common Error, I preſume the Terms of *Doating Trifler*, *Old Fool*, or *Conceited Coxcomb*, will carry Contempt enough for an impartial Cenſor to beſtow on me; that my Style is unequal, pert, and frothy, patch'd and party-colour'd, like

like the Coat of an *Harlequin*; low and pompous, cramm'd with Epithets, ſtrew'd with Scraps of ſecond-hand *Latin* from common Quotations; frequently aiming at Wit, without ever hitting the Mark; a mere Ragouſt, toſs'd up from the Offals of other Authors: My Subject below all Pens but my own, which, whenever I keep to, is flatly dawb'd by one eternal Egotiſm: That I want nothing but Wit, to be as an accompliſh'd a Coxcomb here, as ever I attempted to expoſe on the Theatre: Nay, that this very Confeſſion is no more a ſign of my Modeſty, than it is a Proof of my Judgment; that, in ſhort, you may roundly tell me, that --- *Cinna* (or *Cibber*) *vult videri Pauper, et eſt Pauper.*

When humble Cinna *cries,* I'm Poor and Low,
You may believe him ---- *he is really ſo.*

Well, Sir Critick! and what of all this? Now I have laid myſelf at your Feet, what will you do with me? Expoſe me? Why, dear Sir, does not every Man that writes, expoſe himſelf? Can you make me more ridiculous than Nature has made me? You cou'd not ſure ſuppoſe, that I would loſe the Pleaſure of Writing, becauſe you might poſſibly judge me a Blockhead, or perhaps might pleaſantly tell other People they ought to think me ſo too. Will not they judge as well from what *I* ſay, as from what *You* ſay? If then you attack me merely to divert yourſelf, your Excuſe for writing will be no better than mine. But perhaps you may want Bread: If that be the Caſe, even go to Dinner, i' God's name!

If our beſt Authors, when teiz'd by theſe Triflers, have not been Maſters of this Indifference, I ſhou'd not wonder if it were disbeliev'd in me; but when it is conſider'd that I have allow'd, my never having been diſturb'd into a Reply, has proceeded as much from Vanity as from Philoſophy, the Matter then may not ſeem ſo incredible: And, though I confeſs, the complete Revenge of making them Immortal Dunces in Immor-

tal Verſe, might be glorious; yet, if you will call it Inſenſibility in me, never to have winc'd at them, even that Inſenſibility has its Happineſs, and what could Glory give me more? For my part, I have always had the Comfort to think, whenever they deſign'd me a Diſfavour, it generally flew back into their own Faces, as it happens to Children when they ſquirt at their Play-fellows againſt the Wind. If a Scribbler cannot be eaſy, becauſe he fancies I have too good an Opinion of my own Productions, let him write on, and mortify; I owe him not the Charity to be out of temper myſelf, merely to keep him quiet, or give him Joy: Nor, in reality, can I ſee, why any thing miſrepreſented, tho' believ'd of me by Perſons to whom I am unknown, ought to give me any more Concern, than what may be thought of me in *Lapland:* 'Tis with thoſe with whom I am to *live* only, where my Character can affect me; and I will venture to ſay, he muſt find out a new way of Writing that will make me paſs my Time *there* leſs agreeably.

You ſee, Sir, how hard it is for a Man that is talking of himſelf, to know when to give over; but if you are tired, lay me aſide till you have a freſh Appetite; if not, I'll tell you a Story.

In the Year 1730, there were many Authors, whoſe Merit wanted nothing but Intereſt to recommend them to the vacant *Laurel*, and who took it ill, to ſee it at laſt conferr'd upon a Comedian; inſomuch, that they were reſolv'd, at leaſt, to ſhew Specimens of their ſuperior Pretenſions, and accordingly enliven'd the publick Papers with ingenious Epigrams, and ſatyrical Flirts, at the unworthy Succeſſor: Theſe Papers, my Friends, with a wicked Smile, would often put into my Hands, and deſire me to read them fairly in Company: This was a Challenge which I never declin'd, and, to do my doughty Antagoniſts juſtice, I always read them with as much impartial Spirit, as if I had writ them myſelf. While I was thus beſet on all ſides, there happen'd to ſtep forth a poetical Knight-Errant to my

my Aſſiſtance, who was hardy enough to publiſh ſome compaſſionate Stanzas in my Favour. Theſe, you may be ſure, the Raillery of my Friends could do no leſs than ſay, I had written to myſelf. To deny it, I knew would but have confirm'd their pretended Suſpicion: I therefore told them, ſince it gave them ſuch Joy to believe them my own, I would do my beſt to make the whole Town think ſo too. As the Oddneſs of this Reply was, I knew, what would not be eaſily comprehended, I deſired them to have a Day's Patience, and I would print an Explanation to it: To conclude, in two Days after I ſent this Letter, with ſome doggerel Rhimes at the bottom,

To the Author of the Whitehall Evening-Poſt.

SIR,

THE Verſes to the Laureat, in yours of Saturday *laſt, have occaſion'd the following Reply, which I hope you'll give a place in your next, to ſhew that we can be quick, as well as ſmart, upon a proper Occaſion: And, as I think it the loweſt Mark of a Scoundrel to make bold with any Man's Character in Print, without ſubſcribing the true Name of the Author; I therefore deſire, if the Laureat is concern'd enough, to ask the Queſtion, that you will tell him my Name, and where I live; till then, I beg leave to be known by no other than that of,*

Your Servant,

Monday, Jan. 11, 1730.

FRANCIS FAIRPLAY.

Theſe were the Verſes.

I.

Ah, hah! Sir Coll, *is that thy Way,*
Thy own dull Praiſe to write?
And wou'd'ſt thou ſtand ſo ſure a Lay?
No, that's too ſtale a Bite.

Nature

II.

Nature, and Art, in thee combine,
Thy Talents here excel:
All ſhining Braſs thou doſt outſhine,
To play the Cheat ſo well.

III.

Who ſees thee in Iago's *Part,*
But thinks thee ſuch a Rogue?
And is not glad, with all his Heart,
To hang ſo ſad a Dog?

IV.

When Bays *thou play'ſt, Thyſelf thou art;*
For that by Nature fit,
No Blockhead better ſuits the Part,
Than ſuch a Coxcomb Wit.

V.

In Wronghead *too, thy Brains we ſee,*
Who might do well at Plough;
As fit for Parliament was he,
As for the Laurel, Thou.

VI.

Bring thy protected Verſe from Court,
And try it on the Stage;
There it will make much better Sport,
And ſet the Town in Rage.

VII.

There Beaux, and Wits, and Cits, and Smarts,
Where Hiſſing's not uncivil,
Will ſhew their Parts, to thy Deſerts,
And ſend it to the Devil.

But,

VIII.

But, ah! in vain, 'gainſt Thee we write,
In vain thy Verſe we maul!
Our ſharpeſt Satyr's thy Delight,
* *For* --- Blood! thou'lt ſtand it all.

IX.

Thunder, 'tis ſaid, the Laurel ſpares;
Nought but thy Brows could blaſt it:
And yet --- O curſt, provoking Stars!
Thy Comfort is, thou haſt *it.*

This, Sir, I offer as a Proof, that I was ſeven Years ago the ſame cold Candidate for Fame, which I would ſtill be thought; you will not eaſily ſuppoſe I could have much Concern about it, while, to gratify the merry Pique of my Friends, I was capable of ſeeming to head the Poetical Cry then againſt me, and at the ſame time of never letting the Publick know, 'till this Hour, that theſe Verſes were written by myſelf: Nor do I give them you as an Entertainment, but merely to ſhew you this particular Caſt of my Temper.

When I have ſaid this, I would not have it thought Affectation in me, when I grant, that no Man worthy the Name of an Author, is a more faulty Writer than myſelf; that I am not Maſter of my own Language, I too often feel, when I am at a Loſs for Expreſſion: I know too that I have too bold a Diſregard for that Correctneſs, which others ſet ſo juſt a Value upon: This I ought to be aſham'd of, when I find that Perſons, of perhaps colder Imaginations, are allow'd to write better than myſelf. Whenever I ſpeak of any thing that highly delights me, I find it very difficult to keep my Words within the Bounds of Common Senſe: Even when I write too, the ſame Failing will ſometimes get the better of me; of which I cannot give you a ſtronger Inſtance,

* *A Line in the Epilogue to the* Nonjuror.

Inſtance, than in that wild Expreſſion I made uſe of in the firſt Edition of my Preface to the *Provok'd Husband*; where, ſpeaking of Mrs. *Oldfield*'s excellent Performance in the Part of Lady *Townly*, my Words ran thus, *viz. It is not enough to ſay, that here ſhe outdid* her uſual *Outdoing*. --- A moſt vile Jingle, I grant it! You may well ask me, How could I poſſibly commit ſuch a Wantonneſs to Paper? And I owe myſelf the Shame of confeſſing, I have no Excuſe for it, but that, like a Lover in the Fulneſs of his Content, by endeavouring to be floridly grateful, I talk'd Nonſenſe. Not but it makes me ſmile to remember how many flat Writers have made themſelves brisk upon this ſingle Expreſſion; wherever the Verb, *Outdo*, could come in, the pleaſant Accuſative, *Outdoing*, was ſure to follow it. The provident Wags knew, that *Decies repetita placeret:* ſo delicious a Morſel could not be ſerv'd up too often! After it had held them nine times told for a Jeſt, the Publick has been peſter'd with a tenth Skull, thick enough to repeat it. Nay, the very learned in the Law, have at laſt facetiouſly laid hold of it! Ten Years after it firſt came from me, it ſerv'd to enliven the Eloquence of an eminent Pleader before a Houſe of Parliament! What Author would not envy me ſo frolickſome a Fault, that had ſuch publick Honours paid to it?

After this Conſcioufneſs of my real Defects, you will eaſily judge, Sir, how little I preſume that my Poetical Labours may outlive thoſe of my mortal *Cotemporaries*.

At the ſame time that I am ſo humble in my Pretenſions to Fame, I would not be thought to undervalue it; Nature will not ſuffer us to deſpiſe it, but ſhe may ſometimes make us too fond of it. I have known more than one good Writer, very near ridiculous, from being in too much Heat about it. Whoever intrinſically deſerves it, will always have a proportionable Right to it. It can neither be reſign'd, nor taken from you by Violence. Truth, which is unalterable, muſt (however his Fame may be conteſted) give every Man his Due: What a Poem weighs, it will

will be worth; nor is it in the Power of Human Eloquence, with Favour or Prejudice, to increaſe or diminiſh its Value. Prejudice, 'tis true, may a while diſcolour it; but it will always have its Appeal to the Equity of good Senſe, which will never fail, in the end, to reverſe all falſe Judgment againſt it. Therefore when I ſee an eminent Author hurt, and impatient at an impotent Attack upon his Labours, he diſturbs my Inclination to admire him; I grow doubtful of the favourable Judgment I have made of him, and am quite uneaſy to ſee him ſo tender, in a Point he cannot but know he ought not himſelf to be judge of; his Concern indeed, at another's Prejudice, or Diſapprobation, may be natural; but, to own it, ſeems to me a natural Weakneſs. When a Work is apparently great, it will go without Crutches; all your Art and Anxiety to heighten the Fame of it, then becomes low and little. He that will bear no Cenſure, muſt be often robb'd of his due Praiſe. Fools have as good a Right to be Readers, as Men of Senſe have, and why not to give their Judgments too? Methinks it would be a ſort of Tyranny in Wit, for an Author to be publickly putting every Argument to death that appear'd againſt him; ſo abſolute a Demand for Approbation, puts us upon our Right to diſpute it; Praiſe is as much the Reader's Property, as Wit is the Author's; Applauſe is not a Tax paid to him as a Prince, but rather a Benevolence given to him as a Beggar; and we have naturally more Charity for the dumb Beggar, than the ſturdy one. The Merit of a Writer, and a fine Woman's Face, are never mended by their talking of them: How amiable is ſhe that ſeems not to know ſhe is handſome.

To conclude; all I have ſaid upon this Subject is much better contained in ſix Lines of a Reverend Author, which will be an Anſwer to all critical Cenſure for ever.

Time is the Judge; Time has nor Friend, nor Foe;
Falſe Fame will wither, and the True will grow:

Arm'd with this Truth, all Criticks I defy,
For, if I fall, by my own Pen I die.
While Snarlers ſtrive with proud, but fruitleſs Pain,
To wound Immortals, or to ſlay the Slain.

CHAP. III.

The Author's ſeveral Chances for the Church, the Court, and the Army. Going to the Univerſity. Met the Revolution at Nottingham. *Took Arms on that Side. What he ſaw of it. A few Political Thoughts. Fortune willing to do for him. His neglect of her. The Stage preferr'd to all her Favours. The Profeſſion of an Actor conſider'd. The Misfortunes and Advantages of it.*

I AM now come to that Criſis of my Life, when Fortune ſeem'd to be at a Loſs what ſhe ſhould do with me. Had ſhe favour'd my Father's firſt Deſignation of me, he might then, perhaps, have had as ſanguine hopes of my being a Biſhop, as I afterwards conceiv'd of my being a General, when I firſt took Arms, at the Revolution. Nay, after that, I had a third Chance too, equally as good, of becoming an Under-proper of the State. How, at laſt, I came to be none of all theſe, the Sequel will inform you.

About the Year 1687, I was taken from School to ſtand at the Election of Children into *Wincheſter* College; my being, by my Mother's ſide, a Deſcendant of *William* of *Wickam*, the Founder, my Father (who knew little how the World was to be dealt with) imagined my having that Advantage, would be Security enough for my Succeſs, and ſo ſent me ſimply down thither, without the leaſt favourable Recommendation or Intereſt, but that of my naked Merit, and a pompous Pedigree in my Pocket.

Had

Had he tack'd a Direction to my Back, and ſent me by the Carrier to the Mayor of the Town, to be choſen Member of Parliament there, I might have had juſt as much chance to have ſucceeded in the one, as the other. But I muſt not omit in this place, to let you know, that the Experience which my Father then bought, at my Coſt, taught him, ſome Years after, to take a more judicious care of my younger Brother, *Lewis Cibber*, whom, with the Preſent of a Statue of the Founder, of his own making, he recommended to the ſame College. This Statue now ſtands (I think) over the School Door there, and was ſo well executed, that it ſeem'd to ſpeak ----- for its Kinſman. It was no ſooner ſet up, than the Door of Preferment was open to him.

Here, one wou'd think, my Brother had the Advantage of me, in the Favour of Fortune, by this his firſt laudable Step into the World. I own, I was ſo proud of his Succeſs, that I even valued myſelf upon it; and yet it is but a melancholy Reflexion to obſerve, how unequally his Profeſſion and mine were provided for; when I, who had been the Outcaſt of Fortune, could find means, from my Income of the Theatre, before I was my own Maſter there, to ſupply, in his higheſt Preferment, his common Neceſſities. I cannot part with his Memory without telling you, I had as ſincere a Concern for this Brother's Well-being, as my own. He had lively Parts, and more than ordinary Learning, with a good deal of natural Wit and Humour; but, from too great a Diſregard to his Health, he died a Fellow of *New College* in *Oxford*, ſoon after he had been ordain'd by Dr. *Compton*, then Biſhop of *London*. I now return to the State of my own Affair at *Wincheſter*.

After the Election, the moment I was inform'd that I was one of the unſucceſsful Candidates, I bleſt myſelf to think what a happy Reprieve I had got, from the confin'd Life of a Schoolboy! and the ſame Day took Poſt back to *London*, that I might arrive time enough to ſee a Play (then my darling Delight) be-

fore my Mother might demand an Account of my travelling Charges. When I look back to that time, it almoſt makes me tremble to think what Miſeries, in fifty Years farther in Life, ſuch an unthinking Head was liable to! To ask, why Providence afterwards took more care of me, than I did of myſelf, might be making too bold an Enquiry into its ſecret Will and Pleaſure: All I can ſay to that Point, is, that I am thankful, and amaz'd at it!

'Twas about this time I firſt imbib'd an Inclination, which I durſt not reveal, for the Stage; for, beſides that I knew it would diſoblige my Father, I had no Conception of any means, practicable, to make my way to it. I therefore ſuppreſs'd the bewitching Ideas of ſo ſublime a Station, and compounded with my Ambition by laying a lower Scheme, of only getting the neareſt way into the immediate Life of a Gentleman-Collegiate. My Father being at this time employ'd at *Chattſworth* in *Derbyſhire*, by the (then) Earl of *Devonſhire*, who was raiſing that Seat from a *Gothick*, to a *Grecian*, Magnificence, I made uſe of the Leiſure I then had, in *London*, to open to him, by Letter, my Diſinclination to wait another Year for an uncertain Preferment at *Wincheſter*, and to entreat him that he would ſend me, *per ſaltum*, by a ſhorter Cut, to the Univerſity. My Father, who was naturally indulgent to me, ſeem'd to comply with my Requeſt, and wrote word, that as ſoon as his Affairs would permit, he would carry me with him, and ſettle me in ſome College, but rather at *Cambridge*, where, (during his late Reſidence at that Place, in making ſome Statues that now ſtand upon *Trinity* College New Library, he had contracted ſome Acquaintance with the Heads of Houſes, who might aſſiſt his Intentions for me. This I lik'd better than to go diſcountenanc'd to *Oxford*, to which it would have been a ſort of Reproach to me, not to have come elected. After ſome Months were elaps'd, my Father, not being willing to let me lie too long idling in *London*, ſent for me down to *Chattſworth*, to be under his Eye, till he cou'd be at leiſure to carry

me

me to *Cambridge*. Before I could ſet out, on my Journey thither, the Nation fell in labour of the Revolution, the News being then juſt brought to *London*, That the Prince of *Orange*, at the Head of an Army was landed in the *Weſt*. When I came to *Nottingham*, I found my Father in Arms there, among thoſe Forces which the Earl of *Devonſhire* had rais'd for the Redreſs of our violated Laws and Liberties. My Father judg'd this a proper Seaſon, for a young Strippling to turn himſelf looſe into the Buſtle of the World; and being himſelf too advanc'd in Years, to endure the Winter Fatigue, which might poſſibly follow, entreated that noble Lord, that he would be pleas'd to accept of his Son in his room, and that he would give him (my Father) leave to return, and finiſh his Works at *Chattſworth*. This was ſo well receiv'd by his Lordſhip, that he not only admitted of my Service, but promis'd my Father, in return, that when Affairs were ſettled, he would provide for me. Upon this, my Father return'd to *Derbyſhire*, while I, not a little tranſported, jump'd into his Saddle. Thus, in one Day, all my Thoughts of the Univerſity were ſmother'd in Ambition! A ſlight Cmmiſſion for a Horſe-Officer, was the leaſt View I had before me. At this Criſis you cannot but obſerve, that the Fate of King *James*, and of the Prince of *Orange*, and that of ſo minute a Being as my ſelf, were all at once upon the Anvil: In what ſhape they wou'd ſeverally come out, tho' a good *Gueſs* might be made, was not then *demonſtrable* to the deepeſt Foreſight; but as my Fortune ſeem'd to be of ſmall Importance to the Publick, Providence thought fit to poſtpone it, 'till that of thoſe great Rulers of Nations, was juſtly perfected. Yet, had my Father's Buſineſs permitted him to have carried me, one Month ſooner (as he intended) to the Univerſity, who knows but, by this time, that purer Fountain might have waſh'd my Imperfections into a Capacity of writing (inſtead of Plays and Annual Odes) Sermons, and Paſtoral Letters. But whatever Care of the Church might, ſo, have fallen to my ſhare, as I dare ſay it may be now, in better

better Hands, I ought not to repine at my being otherwiſe diſpos'd of.

You muſt, now, conſider me as one among thoſe deſperate Thouſands, who, after a Patience ſorely try'd, took Arms under the Banner of Neceſſity, the natural Parent of all Human Laws, and Government. I queſtion, if in all the Hiſtories of Empire, there is one Inſtance of ſo bloodleſs a Revolution, as that in *England* in 1688, wherein Whigs, Tories, Princes, Prelates, Nobles, Clergy, common People, and a ſtanding Army, were unanimous. To have ſeen all *England* of one Mind, is to have liv'd at a very particular Juncture. Happy Nation! who are never divided among themſelves, but when they have leaſt to complain of! Our greateſt Grievance ſince that time, ſeems to have been, that we cannot all govern; and 'till the Number of good Places are equal to thoſe, who think themſelves qualified for them, there muſt ever be a Cauſe of Contention among us. While Great Men want great Poſts, the Nation will never want real or ſeeming Patriots; and while great Poſts are fill'd with Perſons, whoſe Capacities are but Human, ſuch Perſons will never be allow'd to be without Errors; not even the Revolution, with all its Advantages, it ſeems, has been able to furniſh us with unexceptionable Stateſmen! for, from that time, I don't remember any one Set of Miniſters, that have not been heartily rail'd at; a Period long enough, one would think, (if all of them have been as bad as they have been call'd) to make a People deſpair of ever ſeeing a good one: But as it is poſſible that Envy, Prejudice, or Party, may ſometimes have a ſhare in what is generally thrown upon 'em, it is not eaſy for a private Man, to know who is abſolutely in the right, from what is ſaid againſt them, or from what their Friends or Dependants may ſay in their Favour: Tho' I can hardly forbear thinking, that they who have been *longeſt* rail'd at, muſt, from that Circumſtance, ſhew, in ſome ſort, a Proof of Capacity. --- But to my Hiſtory.

It

It were almoſt incredible to tell you, at the latter end of King *James*'s Time (though the Rod of Arbitrary Power was always ſhaking over us) with what Freedom and Contempt the common People, in the open Streets, talk'd of his wild Meaſures to make a whole Proteſtant Nation Papiſts; and yet, in the height of our ſecure and wanton Defiance of him, we, of the Vulgar, had no farther Notion of any Remedy for this Evil, than a ſatisfy'd Preſumption, that our Numbers were too great to be maſter'd by his mere Will and Pleaſure; that though he might be too hard for our Laws, he would never be able to get the better of our Nature; and, that to drive all *England* into Popery and Slavery, he would find, would be teaching an old Lion to dance.

But, happy was it for the Nation, that it had then wiſer Heads in it, who knew how to lead a People ſo diſpos'd into Meaſures for the Publick Preſervation.

Here, I cannot help reflecting on the very different Deliverances *England* met with, at this Time, and in the very ſame Year of the Century before: Then (in 1588) under a glorious Princeſs, who had, at heart, the Good and Happineſs of her People, we ſcatter'd and deſtroy'd the moſt formidable Navy of Invaders, that ever cover'd the Seas: And now (in 1688) under a Prince, who had alienated the Hearts of his People, by his abſolute Meaſures, to oppreſs them, a foreign Power is receiv'd with open Arms, in defence of our Laws, Liberties, and Religion, which our native Prince had invaded! How widely different were theſe two Monarchs in their Sentiments of Glory! But, *Tantum religio potuit ſuadere malorum.*

When we conſider, in what height of the Nation's Proſperity, the Succeſſor of Queen *Elizabeth* came to this Throne, it ſeems amazing, that ſuch a Pile of *Engliſh* Fame, and Glory, which her skilful Adminiſtration had erected, ſhould, in every following Reign, down to the Revolution, ſo unhappily moulder away, in one continual Gradation of Political Errors: All which

muſt

muſt have been avoided, if the plain Rule, which that wiſe Princeſs left behind her, had been obſerved, *viz. That the Love of her People was the ſureſt Support of her Throne.* This was the Principle by which ſhe ſo happily govern'd herſelf, and thoſe ſhe had the Care of. In this ſhe found Strength to combat, and ſtruggle through more Difficulties, and dangerous Conſpiracies, than ever *Engliſh* Monarch had to cope with. At the ſame time that ſhe profeſs'd to *deſire* the People's Love, ſhe took care that her Actions ſhou'd *deſerve* it, without the leaſt Abatement of her Prerogative; the Terror of which ſhe ſo artfully covered, that ſhe ſometimes ſeem'd to flatter thoſe ſhe was determin'd ſhould obey. If the four following Princes had exercis'd their Regal Authority with ſo viſible a Regard to the Publick Welfare, it were hard to know, whether the People of *England* might have ever complain'd of them, or even felt the want of that Liberty they now ſo happily enjoy. 'Tis true, that before her Time, our Anceſtors had many ſucceſsful Conteſts with their Sovereigns for their *ancient Right* and *Claim* to it; yet what did thoſe Succeſſes amount to? little more than a Declaration, that there was ſuch a Right in being; but who ever ſaw it enjoy'd? Did not the Actions of almoſt every ſucceeding Reign ſhew, there were ſtill ſo many Doors of Oppreſſion left open to the Prerogative, that (whatever Value our moſt eloquent Legiſlators may have ſet upon thoſe ancient Liberties) I doubt it will be difficult to fix the Period of their having a real Being, before the Revolution: Or if there ever was an elder Period of our unmoleſted enjoying them, I own, my poor Judgment is at a loſs where to place it. I will boldly ſay then, it is, to the Revolution only, we owe the full Poſſeſſion of what, 'till then, we never had more than a perpetually conteſted Right to: And, from thence, from the Revolution it is, that the Proteſtant Succeſſors of King *William* have found their Paternal Care and Maintenance of that Right, has been the ſureſt Baſis of their Glory.

Theſe,

Theſe, Sir, are a few of my political Notions, which I have ventur'd to expoſe, that you may ſee what ſort of an *Engliſh* Subject I am; how wiſe, or weak they may have ſhewn me, is not my Concern; let the weight of theſe Matters have drawn me never ſo far out of my Depth, I ſtill flatter my ſelf, that I have kept a ſimple, honeſt Head above Water. And it is a ſolid Comfort to me, to conſider that how inſignificant ſoever my Life was at the Revolution, it had ſtill the good Fortune to make one, among the many, who brought it about; and that I, now, with my Coævals, as well as with the Millions, ſince born, enjoy the happy Effects of it.

But I muſt now let you ſee how my particular Fortune went forward, with this Change in the Government; of which I ſhall not pretend to give you any farther Account than what my ſimple Eyes ſaw of it.

We had not been many Days at *Nottingham* before we heard, that the Prince of *Denmark*, with ſome other great Perſons, were gone off, from the King, to the Prince of *Orange*, and that the Princeſs *Anne*, fearing the King her Father's Reſentment might fall upon her, for her Conſort's Revolt, had withdrawn her ſelf, in the Night, from *London*, and was then within half a Days Journey of *Nottingham*; on which very Morning we were ſuddenly alarm'd with the News, that two thouſand of the King's Dragoons were in cloſe purſuit to bring her back Priſoner to *London*: But this Alarm it ſeems was all Stratagem, and was but a part of that general Terror which was thrown into many other Places about the Kingdom, at the ſame time, with deſign to animate and unite the People in their common Defence; it being then given out, that the *Iriſh* were every where at our Heels, to cut off all the Proteſtants within the Reach of their Fury. In this Alarm our Troops ſcrambled to Arms in as much Order as their Conſternation would admit of, when having advanc'd ſome few Miles on the *London* Road, they met the Princeſs in a Coach, attended only by the Lady *Churchill* (now Dutcheſs

Dowager of *Marlborough)* and the Lady *Fitzharding*, whom they conducted into *Nottingham*, through the Acclamations of the People: The ſame Night all the Noblemen, and the other Perſons of Diſtinction, then in Arms, had the Honour to ſup at her Royal Highneſs's Table; which was then furniſh'd (as all her neceſſary Accommodations were) by the Care, and at the Charge of the Lord *Devonſhire*. At this Entertainment, of which I was a Spectator, ſomething very particular ſurpriz'd me: The noble Gueſts at the Table happening to be more in number, than Attendants out of Liveries, could be found for, I being well known in the Lord *Devonſhire*'s Family, was deſir'd by his Lordſhip's *Maitre d'Hotel* to aſſiſt at it: The Poſt aſſign'd me was to obſerve what the Lady *Churchill* might call for. Being ſo near the Table, you may naturally ask me, what I might have heard to have paſs'd in Converſation at it? which I ſhould certainly tell you, had I attended to above two Words that were utter'd there, and thoſe were, *Some Wine and Water*. Theſe, I remember, came diſtinguiſh'd, and obſerv'd to my Ear, becauſe they came from the fair Gueſt, whom I took ſuch pleaſure to wait on: Except at that ſingle Sound, all my Senſes were collected into my Eyes, which during the whole Entertainment wanted no better Amuſement, than of ſtealing now and then the delight of gazing on the fair Object ſo near me: If ſo clear an Emanation of Beauty, ſuch a commanding Grace of Aſpect ſtruck me into a Regard that had ſomething ſofter than the moſt profound Reſpect in it, I cannot ſee why I may not, without offence, remember it; ſince Beauty, like the Sun, muſt ſometimes loſe its Power to chuſe, and ſhine into equal Warmth, the Peaſant and the Courtier. Now to give you, Sir, a farther Proof of how good a Taſte my firſt hopeful entrance into Manhood ſet out with, I remember above twenty Years after, when the ſame Lady had given the World four of the lovelieſt Daughters, that ever were gaz'd on, even after they were all nobly married, and were become the reigning Toaſts of every Party of Pleaſure, their ſtill lovely Mother

ther had at the ſame time her Votaries, and her Health very often took the Lead, in thoſe involuntary Triumphs of Beauty. However preſumptuous, or impertinent theſe Thoughts might have appear'd at my firſt entertaining them, why may I not hope that my having kept them decently ſecret, for full fifty Years, may be now a good round Plea for their Pardon? Were I now qualify'd to ſay more of this celebrated Lady, I ſhould conclude it thus: That ſhe has liv'd (to all Appearance) a peculiar Favourite of Providence; that few Examples can parallel the Profuſion of Bleſſings which have attended ſo long a Life of Felicity. A Perſon ſo attractive! a Husband ſo memorably great! an Offspring ſo beautiful! a Fortune ſo immenſe! and a Title, which (when royal Favour had no higher to beſtow) ſhe only cou'd receive from the Author of Nature; a great Grandmother without grey Hairs! Theſe are ſuch conſummate Indulgencies, that we might think Heaven has center'd them all in one Perſon, to let us ſee how far, with a lively Underſtanding, the full Poſſeſſion of them could contribute to human Happineſs------ I now return to our military Affairs.

From *Nottingham* our Troops march'd to *Oxford*; through every Town we paſs'd the People came out, in ſome ſort of Order, with ſuch rural, and ruſty Weapons as they had, to meet us, in Acclamations of welcome, and good Wiſhes. This, I thought, promis'd a favourable End of our Civil War, when the Nation ſeem'd ſo willing to be all of a Side! At *Oxford* the Prince and Princeſs of *Denmark* met, for the firſt time, after their late Separation, and had all poſſible Honours paid them by the Univerſity. Here we reſted in quiet Quarters for ſeveral Weeks, till the Flight of King *James* into *France*; when the Nation being left to take care of it ſelf, the only Security that could be found for it, was to advance the Prince and Princeſs of *Orange* to the vacant Throne. The publick Tranquillity being now ſettled, our Forces were remanded back to *Nottingham*. Here all our Officers, who had commanded them from their firſt riſing, receiv'd Com-

miſſions to confirm them in their ſeveral Poſts; and at the ſame time, ſuch private Men as choſe to return to their proper Buſineſs or Habitations, were offer'd their Diſcharges. Among the ſmall number of thoſe, who receiv'd them, I was one; for not hearing that my Name was in any of theſe new Commiſſions, I thought it time for me to take my leave of Ambition, as Ambition had before ſeduc'd me from the imaginary Honours of the Gown, and therefore reſolv'd to hunt my Fortune in ſome other Field.

From *Nottingham* I again return'd to my Father at *Chattſworth*, where I ſtaid till my Lord came down, with the new Honours of Duke of *Devonſhire*, Lord Steward of his Majeſty's Houſhold, and Knight of the Garter! a noble turn of Fortune! and a deep Stake he had play'd for! which calls to my Memory a Story we had then in the Family, which though too light for our graver Hiſtorians notice, may be of weight enough for my humble Memoirs. This noble Lord being in the Preſence-Chamber, in King *James*'s time, and known to be no Friend to the Meaſures of his Adminiſtration; a certain Perſon in favour there, and deſirous to be more ſo, took occaſion to tread rudely upon his Lordſhip's Foot, which was return'd with a ſudden Blow upon the Spot: For this Miſdemeanour his Lordſhip was fin'd thirty thouſand Pounds; but I think had ſome time allow'd him for the Payment. In the Summer preceding the Revolution, when his Lordſhip was retir'd to *Chattſworth*, and had been there deeply engag'd with other Noblemen, in the Meaſures, which ſoon after brought it to bear, King *James* ſent a Perſon down to him, with Offers to mitigate his Fine, upon Conditions of ready Payment, to which his Lordſhip reply'd, that if his Majeſty pleas'd to allow him a little longer time, he would rather chuſe to play *double* or *quit* with him: The time of the intended Riſing being then ſo near at hand, the Demand, it ſeems, came too late for a more ſerious Anſwer.

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However low my Pretenſions to Preferment were at this time, my Father thought that a little Court Favour added to them, might give him a Chance for ſaving the Expence of maintaining me, as he had intended at the Univerſity: He therefore order'd me to draw up a Petition to the Duke, and to give it ſome Air of Merit, to put it into *Latin*, the Prayer of which was, that his Grace would be pleas'd to do ſomething (I really forget what) for me--- However the Duke upon receiving it, was ſo good as to deſire my Father would ſend me to *London* in the Winter, where he would conſider of ſome Proviſion for me. It might, indeed, well require time to conſider it; for I believe it was then harder to know what I was really fit for, than to have got me any thing I was not fit for: However, to *London* I came, where I enter'd into my firſt State of Attendance and Dependance for about five Months, till the *February* following. But alas! in my Intervals of Leiſure, by frequently ſeeing Plays, my wiſe Head was turn'd to higher Views, I ſaw no Joy in any other Life than that of an Actor, ſo that (as before, when a Candidate at *Winchester*) I was even afraid of ſucceeding to the Preferment I ſought for: 'Twas on the Stage alone I had form'd a Happineſs preferable to all that Camps or Courts could offer me! and there was I determin'd, let Father and Mother take it as they pleas'd, to fix my *non ultra*. Here I think my ſelf oblig'd, in reſpect to the Honour of that noble Lord, to acknowledge, that I believe his real Intentions to do well for me, were prevented by my own inconſiderate Folly; ſo that if my Life did not then take a more laudable Turn, I have no one but my ſelf to reproach for it; for I was credibly inform'd by the Gentlemen of his Houſhold, that his Grace had, in their hearing, talk'd of recommending me to the Lord *Shrewsbury*, then Secretary of State, for the firſt proper Vacancy in that Office. But the diſtant Hope of a Reverſion was too cold a Temptation for a Spirit impatient as mine, that wanted immediate Poſſeſſion of what my Heart was ſo differently ſet upon. The Allurements of a Theatre are ſtill

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ſo ſtrong in my Memory, that perhaps few, except thoſe who have felt them, can conceive: And I am yet ſo far willing to excuſe my Folly, that I am convinc'd, were it poſſible to take off that Diſgrace and Prejudice, which Cuſtom has thrown upon the Profeſſion of an Actor, many a well-born younger Brother, and Beauty of low Fortune would gladly have adorn'd the Theatre, who by their not being able to brook ſuch Diſhonour to their Birth, have paſs'd away their Lives decently unheeded and forgotten.

Many Years ago, when I was firſt in the Management of the Theatre, I remember a ſtrong Inſtance, which will ſhew you what degree of Ignominy the Profeſſion of an Actor was then held at---- A Lady, with a real Title, whoſe female Indiſcretions had occaſion'd her Family to abandon her, being willing, in her diſtreſs to make an honeſt Penny of what Beauty ſhe had left, deſir'd to be admitted as an Actreſs; when before ſhe could receive our Anſwer, a Gentleman (probably by her Relation's Permiſſion) adviſ'd us not to entertain her, for Reaſons eaſy to be gueſs'd. You may imagine we cou'd not be ſo blind to our Intereſt as to make an honourable Family our unneceſſary Enemies, by not taking his Advice; which the Lady too being ſenſible of, ſaw the Affair had its Difficulties; and therefore purſu'd it no farther. Now is it not hard that it ſhould be a doubt, whether this Lady's Condition or ours were the more melancholy? For here, you find her honeſt Endeavour, to get Bread from the Stage, was look'd upon as on Addition of new Scandal to her former Diſhonour! ſo that I am afraid, according to this way of thinking, had the ſame Lady ſtoop'd to have ſold Patches and Pomatum, in a Band-box, from Door to Door, ſhe might, in that Occupation have ſtarv'd, with leſs Infamy, than had ſhe reliev'd her Neceſſities by being famous on the Theatre. Whether this Prejudice may have ariſen from the Abuſes that ſo often have crept in upon the Stage, I am not clear in; tho' when that is groſsly the Caſe, I will allow there ought to be no Limits ſet to the

the Contempt of it; yet in its loweſt Condition, in my time, methinks there could have been no great Pretence of preferring the Band-box to the Buskin. But this ſevere Opinion, whether merited, or not, is not the greateſt Diſtreſs that this Profeſſion is liable to.

I ſhall now give you another Anecdote, quite the Reverſe of what I have inſtanc'd, wherein you will ſee an Actreſs, as hardly us'd for an Act of Modeſty (which without being a Prude, a Woman, even upon the Stage, may ſometimes think it neceſſary not to throw off.) This too I am forc'd to premiſe, that the Truth of what I am going to tell you, may not be ſneer'd at before it be known. About the Year 1717, a young Actreſs, of a deſirable Perſon, ſitting in an upper Box at the Opera, a military Gentleman thought this a proper Opportunity to ſecure a little Converſation with her; the Particulars of which were, probably, no more worth repeating, than it ſeems the *Damoiſelle* then thought them worth liſtening to; for, notwithſtanding the fine Things he ſaid to her, ſhe rather choſe to give the Muſick the Preference of her Attention: This Indifference was ſo offenſive to his high Heart, that he began to change the Tender, into the Terrible, and, in ſhort, proceeded at laſt to treat her in a Style too groſly inſulting, for the meaneſt Female Ear to endure unreſented: Upon which, being beaten too far out of her Diſcretion, ſhe turn'd haſtily upon him, with an angry Look, and a Reply, which ſeem'd to ſet his Merit in ſo low a Regard, that he thought himſelf oblig'd, in Honour, to take his time to reſent it: This was the full Extent of her Crime, which his Glory delay'd no longer to puniſh, than 'till the next time ſhe was to appear upon the Stage: There, in one of her beſt Parts, wherein ſhe drew a favourable Regard and Approbation from the Audience, he, diſpenſing with the Reſpect which ſome People think due to a polite Aſſembly, began to interrupt her Performance, with ſuch loud and various Notes of Mockery, as other young Men of Honour, in the ſame Place, have ſometimes made

made themſelves undauntedly merry with: Thus, deaf to all Murmurs or Entreaties of thoſe about him, he purſued his Point, even to throwing near her ſuch Traſh, as no Perſon can be ſuppos'd to carry about him, unleſs to uſe on ſo particular an Occaſion.

A Gentleman, then behind the Scenes, being ſhock'd at his unmanly Behaviour, was warm enough to ſay, That no Man, but a Fool, or a Bully, cou'd be capable of inſulting an Audience, or a Woman, in ſo monſtrous a manner. The former valiant Gentleman, to whoſe Ear the Words were ſoon brought, by his Spies, whom he had plac'd behind the Scenes, to obſerve how the Action was taken there, came immediately from the Pit, in a Heat, and demanded to know of the Author of thoſe Words, if he was the Perſon that ſpoke them? to which he calmly reply'd, That though he had never ſeen him before, yet, ſince he ſeem'd ſo earneſt to be ſatisfy'd, he would do him the favour to own, That, indeed, the Words were his, and that they would be the laſt Words he ſhould chuſe to deny, whoever they might fall upon. To conclude, their Diſpute was ended the next Morning in *Hyde-Park*, where the determin'd Combatant, who firſt ask'd for Sātisfaction, was oblig'd afterwards to ask his Life too; whether he mended it or not, I have not yet heard; but his Antagoniſt, in a few Years after, died in one of the principal Poſts of the Government.

Now though I have, ſometimes, known theſe gallant Inſulters of Audiences, draw themſelves into Scrapes, which they have leſs honourably got out of; yet, alas! what has that avail'd? This generous publick-ſpirited Method of ſilencing a few, was but repelling the Diſeaſe, in one Part, to make it break out in another: All Endeavours at Protection are new Provocations, to thoſe who pride themſelves in puſhing their Courage to a Defiance of Humanity. Even when a Royal Reſentment has ſhewn itſelf, in the behalf of an injur'd Actor, it has been unable to defend him from farther Inſults! an Inſtance of which happen'd

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in the late King *James*'s time. Mr. *Smith* (whoſe Character as a Gentleman, could have been no way impeach'd, had he not degraded it, by being a celebrated Actor) had the Misfortune, in a Diſpute with a Gentleman behind the Scenes, to receive a Blow from him: The ſame Night an Account of this Action was carry'd to the King, to whom the Gentleman was repreſented ſo groſly in the wrong, that, the next Day, his Majeſty ſent to forbid him the Court upon it. This Indignity caſt upon a Gentleman, only for having maltreated a Player, was 'd upon as the Concern of every Gentleman; and a Party was ſoon form'd to aſſert, and vindicate their Honour, by humbling this favour'd Actor, whoſe ſlight Injury had been judg'd equal to ſo ſevere a Notice. Accordingly, the next time *Smith* acted, he was receiv'd with a Chorus of Cat-calls, that ſoon convinc'd him, he ſhould not be ſuffer'd to proceed in his Part; upon which, without the leaſt Diſcompoſure, he order'd the Curtain to be dropp'd; and, having a competent Fortune of his own, thought the Conditions of adding to it, by his remaining upon the Stage, were too dear, and from that Day entirely quitted it. I ſhall make no Obſervation upon the King's Reſentment, or on that of his good Subjects; how far either was, or was not right, is not the Point I diſpute for: Be that as it may, the unhappy Condition of the Actor was ſo far from being reliev'd by this Royal Interpoſition in his favour, that it was the worſe for it.

While theſe ſort of real Diſtreſſes, on the Stage, are ſo unavoidable, it is no wonder that young People of Senſe (though of low Fortune) ſhould be ſo rarely found, to ſupply a Succeſſion of good Actors. Why then may we not, in ſome meaſure, impute the Scarcity of them, to the wanton Inhumanity of thoſe Spectators, who have made it ſo terribly mean to appear there? Were there no ground for this Queſtion, where could be the Diſgrace of entring into a Society, whoſe Inſtitution, when not abus'd, is a delightful School of Morality; and where to excel, requires as ample Endowments of Nature, as any one Profeſſion

(that of holy Inſtitution excepted) whatſoever? But, alas! as *Shakeſpear* ſays,

Where's that Palace, whereinto, ſometimes
Foul things intrude not?

Look into St. *Peter*'s at *Rome*, and ſee what a profitable Farce is made of Religion there! Why then is an Actor more blemiſh'd than a Cardinal? While the Excellence of the one ariſes from his innocently ſeeming what he is not, and the Eminence of the other, from the moſt impious Fallacies that can be impos'd upon human Underſtanding? If the beſt things, therefore, are moſt liable to Corruption, the Corruption of the Theatre is no Diſproof of its innate and primitive Utility.

In this Light, therefore, all the Abuſes of the Stage, all the low, looſe, or immoral Supplements, to wit, whether, in making Virtue ridiculous, or Vice agreeable, or in the decorated Nonſenſe and Abſurdities of Pantomimical Trumpery, I give up to the Contempt of every ſenſible Spectator, as ſo much rank Theatrical Popery. But cannot ſtill allow theſe Enormities to impeach the Profeſſion, while they are ſo palpably owing to the deprav'd Taſte of the Multitude. While Vice, and Farcical Folly, are the moſt profitable Commodities, why ſhould we wonder that, time out of mind, the poor Comedian, when real Wit would bear no Price, ſhould deal in what would bring him moſt ready Money? But this, you will ſay, is making the Stage a Nurſery of Vice and Folly, or at leaſt keeping an open Shop for it.---I grant it: But who do you expect ſhould reform it? The Actors? Why ſo? If People are permitted to buy it, without bluſhing, the Theatrical Merchant ſeems to have an equal Right to the Liberty of ſelling it, without Reproach. That this Evil wants a Remedy, is not to be conteſted; nor can it be denied, that the Theatre is as capable of being preſerv'd, by a Reformation, as Matters of more Importance; which, for the Honour of our national Taſte, I could wiſh were attempted; and then,

then, if it could not ſubſiſt, under decent Regulations, by not being permitted to preſent any thing there, but what were *worthy* to be there, it would be time enough to conſider, whether it were neceſſary to let it totally fall, or effectually ſupport it.

Notwithſtanding all my beſt Endeavours, to recommend the Profeſſion of an Actor, to a more general Favour, I doubt, while it is liable to ſuch Corruptions, and the Actor himſelf to ſuch unlimited Inſults, as I have already mention'd, I doubt, I ſay, we muſt ſtill leave him a-drift, with his intrinſick Merit, to ride out the Storm as well as he is able.

However, let us now turn to the other ſide of this Account, and ſee what Advantages ſtand there, to balance the Misfortunes I have laid before you. There we ſhall ſtill find ſome valuable Articles of Credit, that, ſometimes overpay his incidental Diſgraces.

Firſt, if he has Senſe, he will conſider, that as theſe Indignities are ſeldom or never offer'd him by People, that are remarkable for any one good Quality, he ought not to lay them too cloſe to his Heart: He will know too, that when Malice, Envy, or a brutal Nature, can ſecurely hide or fence themſelves in a Multitude, Virtue, Merit, Innocence, and even ſovereign Superiority, have been, and muſt be equally liable to their Inſults; that therefore, when they fall upon him in the ſame manner, his intrinſick Value cannot be diminiſh'd by them: On the contrary, if, with a decent and unruffled Temper, he lets them paſs, the Diſgrace will return upon his Agreſſor, and perhaps warm the generous Spectator into a Partiality in his Favour.

That while he is conſcious, that, as an Actor, he muſt be always in the Hands of Injuſtice, it does him at leaſt this involuntary Good, that it keeps him in a ſettled Reſolution to avoid all Occaſions of provoking it, or of even offending the loweſt Enemy, who, at the Expence of a Shilling, may publickly revenge it.

That, if he excells on the Stage, and is irreproachable in his Perſonal Morals, and Behaviour, his Profeſſion is ſo far from being an Impediment, that it will be oftner a juſt Reaſon for his being receiv'd among People of condition with Favour; and ſometimes with a more ſocial Diſtinction, than the beſt, though more profitable Trade he might have follow'd, could have recommended him to.

That this is a Happineſs to which ſeveral Actors, within my Memory, as *Betterton*, *Smith*, *Montfort*, Captain *Griffin*, and Mrs. *Bracegirdle* (yet living) have arriv'd at; to which I may add the late celebrated Mrs. *Oldfield*. Now let us ſuppoſe theſe Perſons, the Men, for example, to have been all eminent Mercers, and the Women as famous Milliners, can we imagine, that merely as ſuch, though endow'd with the ſame natural Underſtanding, they could have been call'd into the ſame honourable Parties of Converſation? People of Senſe and Condition, could not but know, it was impoſſible they could have had ſuch various Excellencies on the Stage, without having ſomething naturally valuable in them: And I will take upon me to affirm, who knew them all living, that there was not one of the number, who were not capable of ſupporting a variety of Spirited Converſation, tho' the Stage were never to have been the Subject of it.

That, to have trod the Stage, has not always been thought a Diſqualification from more honourable Employments; ſeveral have had military Commiſſions; *Carliſle* and *Wiltſhire* were both kill'd Captains; one, in King *William*'s Reduction of *Ireland*; and the other, in his firſt War, in *Flanders*; and the famous *Ben. Johnſon*, tho' an unſucceſsful Actor, was afterwards made Poet-Laureat.

To theſe laudable Diſtinctions, let me add one more; that of Publick Applauſe, which, when truly merited, is, perhaps, one of the moſt agreeable Gratifications that venial Vanity can feel. A Happineſs, almoſt peculiar to the Actor, inſomuch that the

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beſt Tragick Writer, however numerous his ſeparate Admirers may be, yet, to unite them into one general Act of Praiſe, to receive at once, thoſe thundring Peals of Approbation, which a crouded Theatre throws out, he muſt ſtill call in the Aſſiſtance of the skilful Actor, to raiſe and partake of them.

In a Word, 'twas in this flattering Light only, though not perhaps ſo thoroughly conſider'd, I look'd upon the Life of an Actor, when but eighteen Years of Age; nor can you wonder, if the Temptations were too ſtrong for ſo warm a Vanity as mine to reſiſt; but whether excuſable, or not, to the Stage, at length I came, and it is from thence, chiefly, your Curioſity, if you have any left, is to expect a farther Account of me.

CHAP. IV.

A ſhort View of the Stage, from the Year 1660 *to the Revolution. The King's and Duke's Company united, compoſed the beſt Set of* Engliſh *Actors yet known. Their ſeveral Theatrical Characters.*

THO' I have only promis'd you an Account of all the material Occurrences of the Theatre during my own Time; yet there was one which happen'd not above ſeven Years before my Admiſſion to it, which may be as well worth notice, as the firſt great Revolution of it, in which, among numbers, I was involv'd. And as the one will lead you into a clearer View of the other, it may therefore be previouſly neceſſary to let you know that

King *Charles* II. at his Reſtoration, granted two Patents, one to Sir *William Davenant*, and the other to *Henry Killigrew*, Eſq; and their ſeveral Heirs and Aſſigns, for ever, for the forming of two diſtinct Companies of Comedians: The firſt were call'd the *King's Servants*, and acted at the Theatre-Royal in *Drury-Lane*; and

and the other the *Duke's Company*, who acted at the Duke's Theatre in *Dorset-Garden*. About ten of the King's Company were on the Royal Houshold-Establishment, having each ten Yards of Scarlet Cloth, with a proper quantity of Lace allow'd them for Liveries; and in their Warrants from the Lord Chamberlain, were stiled *Gentlemen of the Great Chamber*: Whether the like Appointments were extended to the Duke's Company, I am not certain; but they were both in high Estimation with the Publick, and so much the Delight and Concern of the Court, that they were not only supported by its being frequently present at their publick *Presentations*, but by its taking cognizance even of their private Government, insomuch, that their particular Differences, Pretentions, or Complaints, were generally ended by the *King*, or *Duke's* Personal Command or Decision. Besides their being thorough Masters of their Art, these Actors set forwards with two critical Advantages, which perhaps may never happen again in many Ages. The one was, their immediate opening after so long Interdiction of Plays, during the Civil War, and the Anarchy that follow'd it. What eager Appetites from so long a Fast, must the Guests of those Times have had, to that high and fresh variety of Entertainments, which *Shakespear* had left prepar'd for them? Never was a Stage so provided! A hundred Years are wasted, and another silent Century well advanced, and yet what unborn Age shall say, *Shakespear* has his Equal! How many shining Actors have the warm Scenes of his Genius given to Posterity? without being himself, in his Action, equal to his Writing! A strong Proof that Actors, like Poets, must be born such. Eloquence and Elocution are quite different Talents: *Shakespear* cou'd write *Hamlet*; but Tradition tells us, That the *Ghost*, in the same Play, was one of his best Performances as an Actor: Nor is it within the reach of Rule or Precept to complete either of them. Instruction, 'tis true, may guard them equally against Faults or Absurdities, but there it stops; Nature must do the rest: To excel

cel in either Art, is a ſelf-born Happineſs, which ſomething more than good Senſe muſt be the Mother of.

The other Advantage I was ſpeaking of, is, that before the Reſtoration, no Actreſſes had ever been ſeen upon the *Engliſh* Stage. The Characters of Women, on former Theatres, were perform'd by Boys, or young Men of the moſt effeminate Aſpect. And what Grace, or Maſter-ſtrokes of Action can we conceive ſuch ungain Hoydens to have been capable of? This Defect was ſo well conſider'd by *Shakeſpear*, that in few of his Plays, he has any greater Dependance upon the Ladies, than in the Innocence and Simplicity of a *Deſdemona*, an *Ophelia*, or in the ſhort Specimen of a fond and virtuous *Portia*. The additional Objects then of real, beautiful Women, could not but draw a proportion of new Admirers to the Theatre. We may imagine too, that theſe Actreſſes were not ill choſen, when it is well known, that more than one of them had Charms ſufficient at their leiſure Hours, to calm and mollify the Cares of Empire. Beſides theſe peculiar Advantages, they had a private Rule or Agreement, which both Houſes were happily ty'd down to, which was, that no Play acted at one Houſe, ſhould ever be attempted at the other. All the capital Plays therefore of *Shakeſpear*, *Fletcher*, and *Ben. Johnſon*, were divided between them, by the Approbation of the Court, and their own alternate Choice: So that when *Hart* was famous for *Othello*, *Betterton* had no leſs a Reputation for *Hamlet*. By this Order the Stage was ſupply'd with a greater variety of Plays, than could poſſibly have been ſhewn, had both Companies been employ'd at the ſame time, upon the ſame Play; which Liberty too, muſt have occaſion'd ſuch frequent Repetitions of 'em, by their oppoſite Endeavours to foreſtall and anticipate one another, that the beſt Actors in the World muſt have grown tedious and taſteleſs to the Spectator: For what Pleaſure is not languid to Satiety? It was therefore one of our greateſt Happineſſes (during my time of being in the Management of the Stage) that we

we had a certain number of ſelect Plays, which no other Company had the good Fortune to make a tolerable Figure in, and conſequently, could find little or no Account, by acting them againſt us. Theſe Plays therefore, for many Years, by not being too often ſeen, never fail'd to bring us crowded Audiences; and it was to this Conduct we ow'd no little ſhare of our Proſperity. But when four Houſes are at once (as very lately they were) all permitted to act the ſame Pieces, let three of them perform never ſo ill, when Plays come to be ſo harraſs'd and hackney'd out to the common People (half of which too, perhaps would as lieve ſee them at one Houſe as another) the beſt Actors will ſoon feel that the Town has enough of them.

I know it is the common Opinion, That the more Playhouſes, the more Emulation; I grant it; but what has this Emulation ended in? Why, a daily Contention which ſhall ſooneſt ſurfeit you with the beſt Plays; ſo that when what *ought* to pleaſe, can no *longer* pleaſe, your Appetite is again to be rais'd by ſuch monſtrous Preſentations, as diſhonour the Taſte of a civiliz'd People. If, indeed, to our ſeveral Theatres, we could raiſe a proportionable number of good Authors, to give them all different Employment, then, perhaps, the Publick might profit from their Emulation: But while good Writers are ſo ſcarce, and undaunted Criticks ſo plenty, I am afraid a good Play, and a blazing Star, will be equal Rarities. This voluptuous Expedient, therefore, of indulging the Taſte with ſeveral Theatres, will amount to much the ſame variety as that of a certain Oeconomiſt, who, to enlarge his Hoſpitality, would have two Puddings, and two Legs of Mutton, for the ſame Dinner.--- But, to reſume the Thread of my Hiſtory.

Theſe two excellent Companies were both proſperous for ſome few Years, 'till their Variety of Plays began to be exhauſted: Then of courſe, the better Actors (which the King's ſeem to have been allow'd) could not fail of drawing the greater Audiences.

Sir

Sir *William Davenant*, therefore, Maſter of the Duke's Company, to make Head againſt their Succeſs, was forc'd to add Spectacle and Muſick to Action; and to introduce a new Species of Plays, ſince call'd Dramatick Opera's, of which kind were the *Tempeſt*, *Pſyche*, *Circe*, and others, all ſet off with the moſt expenſive Decorations of Scenes and Habits, with the beſt Voices and Dancers.

This ſenſual Supply of Sight and Sound, coming in to the Aſſiſtance of the weaker Party, it was no Wonder they ſhould grow too hard for Senſe and ſimple Nature, when it is conſider'd how many more People there are, that can ſee and hear, than think and judge. So wanton a Change of the publick Taſte, therefore, began to fall as heavy upon the King's Company, as their greater Excellence in Action, had, before, fallen upon their Competitors: Of which Encroachment upon Wit, ſeveral good Prologues in thoſe Days frequently complain'd.

But alas! what can Truth avail, when its Dependance is much more upon the Ignorant, than the ſenſible Auditor? a poor Satiſfaction, that the due Praiſe given to it, muſt at laſt, ſink into the cold Comfort of--- *Laudatur & Alget.* Unprofitable Praiſe can hardly give it a *Soup maigre.* Taſte and Faſhion, with us, have always had Wings, and fly from one publick Spectacle to another ſo wantonly, that I have been inform'd, by thoſe, who remember it, that a famous Puppet-ſhew, in *Salisbury* Change (then ſtanding where *Cecil-Street* now is) ſo far diſtreſt theſe two celebrated Companies, that they were reduc'd to petition the King for Relief againſt it: Nor ought we perhaps to think this ſtrange, when if I miſtake not, *Terence* himſelf reproaches the *Roman* Auditors of his Time, with the like Fondneſs for the *Funambuli*, the Rope-dancers. Not to dwell too long therefore upon that Part of my Hiſtory, which I have only collected, from oral Tradition, I ſhall content my ſelf with telling you, that *Mohun*, and *Hart* now growing old (for, above thirty Years before this Time, they had ſeverally born the King's Commiſſion of Major and Captain, in the Civil Wars) and the younger Actors, as *Goodman*, *Clark*,

and others, being impatient to get into their Parts, and growing intractable, the Audiences too of both Houſes then falling off, the Patentees of each, by the King's Advice, which perhaps amounted to a Command, united their Intereſts, and both Companies into one, excluſive of all others, in the Year 1684. This Union was, however, ſo much in favour of the Duke's Company, that *Hart* left the Stage upon it, and *Mohun* ſurviv'd not long after.

One only Theatre being now in Poſſeſſion of the whole Town, the united Patentees impos'd their own Terms, upon the Actors; for the Profits of acting were then divided into twenty Shares, ten of which went to the Proprietors, and the other Moiety to the principal Actors, in ſuch Sub-diviſions as their different Merit might pretend to. Theſe Shares of the Patentees were promiſcuouſly ſold out to Mony-making Perſons, call'd Adventurers, who, tho' utterly ignorant of Theatrical Affairs, were ſtill admitted to a proportionate Vote in the Management of them; all particular Encouragements to Actors were by them, of Conſequence, look'd upon as ſo many Sums deducted from their private Dividends. While therefore the Theatrical Hive had ſo many Drones in it, the labouring Actors, ſure, were under the higheſt Diſcouragement, if not a direct State of Oppreſſion. Their Hardſhip will at leaſt appear in a much ſtronger Light, when compar'd to our later Situation, who with ſcarce half their Merit, ſucceeded to be Sharers under a Patent upon five times eaſier Conditions: For as they had but half the Profits divided among ten, or more of them; we had three fourths of the whole Profits, divided only among three of us: And as they might be ſaid to have ten Task-maſters over them, we never had but one Aſſiſtant-manager (not an Actor) join'd with us; who, by the Crown's Indulgence, was ſometimes too of our own chuſing. Under this heavy Eſtabliſhment then groan'd this United Company, when I was firſt admitted into the loweſt Rank of it. How they came to be reliev'd by King *William*'s Licence in 1695, how they were

again

again diſpers'd, early in Queen *Anne*'s Reign; and from what Accidents Fortune took better care of *Us*, their unequal Succeſſors, will be told in its Place: But to prepare you for the opening ſo large a Scene of their Hiſtory, methinks I ought, (in Juſtice to their Memory too) to give you ſuch particular Characters of their Theatrical Merit, as in my plain Judgment they ſeem'd to deſerve. Preſuming then, that this Attempt may not be diſagreeable to the Curious, or the true Lovers of the Theatre, take it without farther Preface.

In the Year 1690, when I firſt came into this Company, the principal Actors then at the Head of it were,

Of Men.	Of Women.
Mr. *Betterton*,	Mrs. *Betterton*,
Mr. *Monfort*,	Mrs. *Barry*,
Mr. *Kynaſton*,	Mrs. *Leigh*,
Mr. *Sandford*,	Mrs. *Butler*,
Mr. *Nokes*,	Mrs. *Monfort*, and
Mr. *Underhil*, and	Mrs. *Bracegirdle.*
Mr. *Leigh.*	

Theſe Actors, whom I have ſelected from their Cotemporaries, were all original Maſters in their different Stile, not meer auricular Imitators of one another, which commonly is the higheſt Merit of the middle Rank; but Self-judges of nature, from whoſe various Lights they only took their true Inſtruction. If in the following Account of them, I may be oblig'd to hint at the Faults of others, I never mean ſuch Obſervations ſhould extend to thoſe who are now in Poſſeſſion of the Stage; for as I deſign not my Memoirs ſhall come down to their Time, I would not lie under the Imputation of ſpeaking in their Diſfavour to the Publick, whoſe Approbation they muſt depend upon for Support. But to my Purpoſe.

Betterton was an Actor, as *Shakeſpear* was an Author, both without Competitors! form'd for the mutal Aſſiſtance, and Illu-

ſtration of each others Genius! How *Shakeſpear* wrote, all Men who have a Taſte for Nature may read, and know--- but with what higher Rapture would he ſtill be *read*, could they conceive how *Betterton play'd* him! Then might they know, the one was born alone to ſpeak what the other only knew, to write! Pity it is, that the momentary Beauties flowing from an harmonious Elocution, cannot like thoſe of Poetry, be their own Record! That the animated Graces of the Player can live no longer than the inſtant Breath and Motion that preſents them; or at beſt can but faintly glimmer through the Memory, or imperfect Atteſtation of a few ſurviving Spectators. Could *how Betterton* ſpoke be as eaſily known as *what* he ſpoke; then might you ſee the Muſe of *Shakeſpear* in her Triumph, with all her Beauties in their beſt Array, riſing into real Life, and charming her Beholders. But alas! ſince all this is ſo far out of the reach of Deſcription, how ſhall I ſhew you *Betterton?* Should I therefore tell you, that all the *Othellos*, *Hamlets*, *Hotſpurs*, *Mackbeths*, and *Brutus*'s, whom you may have ſeen ſince his time, have fallen far ſhort of him; This ſtill would give you no Idea of his particular Excellence. Let us ſee then what a particular Compariſon may do! whether that may yet draw him nearer to you?

You have ſeen a *Hamlet* perhaps, who, on the firſt appearance of his Father's Spirit, has thrown himſelf into all the ſtraining Vociferation requiſite to expreſs Rage and Fury, and the Houſe has thunder'd with Applauſe; tho' the miſ-guided Actor was all the while (as *Shakeſpear* terms it) tearing a Paſſion into Rags---- I am the more bold to offer you this particular Inſtance, becauſe the late Mr. *Addiſon*, while I ſate by him, to ſee this Scene acted, made the ſame Obſervation, asking me with ſome Surprize, if I thought *Hamlet* ſhould be in ſo violent a Paſſion with the Ghoſt, which tho' it might have aſtoniſh'd, it had not provok'd him? for you may obſerve that in this beautiful Speech, the Paſſion never riſes beyond an almoſt breathleſs Aſtoniſhment, or an Impatience, limited by filial Reverence, to enquire into the ſuſpected

Wrongs

Wrongs that may have rais'd him from his peaceful Tomb! and a Deſire to know what a Spirit ſo ſeemingly diſtreſt, might wiſh or enjoin a ſorrowful Son to execute towards his future Quiet in the Grave? This was the Light into which *Betterton* threw this Scene; which he open'd with a Pauſe of mute Amazement! then riſing ſlowly, to a ſolemn, trembling Voice, he made the Ghoſt equally terrible to the Spectator, as to himſelf! and in the deſcriptive Part of the natural Emotions which the ghaſtly Viſion gave him, the boldneſs of his Expoſtulation was ſtill govern'd by Decency, manly, but not braving; his Voice never riſing into that ſeeming Outrage, or wild Defiance of what he naturally rever'd. But alas! to preſerve this Medium, between mouthing, and meaning too little, to keep the Attention more pleaſingly awake, by a temper'd Spirit, than by meer Vehemence of Voice, is of all the Maſter-ſtrokes of an Actor the moſt difficult to reach. In this none yet have equall'd *Betterton.* But I am unwilling to ſhew his Superiority only by recounting the Errors of thoſe, who now cannot anſwer to them, let their farther Failings therefore be forgotten! or rather, ſhall I in ſome meaſure excuſe them? For I am not yet ſure, that they might not be as much owing to the falſe Judgment of the Spectator, as the Actor. While the Million are ſo apt to be tranſported, when the Drum of their Ear is ſo roundly rattled; while they take the Life of Elocution to lie in the Strength of the Lungs, it is no wonder the Actor, whoſe end is Applauſe, ſhould be ſo often tempted, at this eaſy rate, to excite it. Shall I go a little farther? and allow that this Extreme is more pardonable than its oppoſite Error. I mean that dangerous Affectation of the Monotone, or ſolemn Sameneſs of Pronunciation, which to my Ear is inſupportable; for of all Faults that ſo frequently paſs upon the Vulgar, that of Flatneſs will have the feweſt Admirers. That this is an Error of ancient ſtanding ſeems evident by what *Hamlet* ſays, in his Inſtructions to the Players, *viz.*

Be not too tame, neither, &c.

The

The Actor, doubtleſs, is as ſtrongly ty'd down to the Rules of *Horace*, as the Writer.

Si vis me flere, dolendum eſt
Primum ipſi tibi -----

He that feels not himſelf the Paſſion he would raiſe, will talk to a ſleeping Audience: But this never was the Fault of *Betterton*; and it has often amaz'd me, to ſee thoſe who ſoon came after him, throw out in ſome Parts of a Character, a juſt and graceful Spirit, which *Betterton* himſelf could not but have applauded. And yet in the equally ſhining Paſſages of the ſame Character, have heavily dragg'd the Sentiment along, like a dead Weight; with a long-ton'd Voice, and abſent Eye, as if they had fairly forgot what they were about: If you have never made this Obſervation, I am contented you ſhould not know, where to apply it.

A farther Excellence in *Betterton*, was, that he could vary his Spirit to the different Characters he acted. Thoſe wild impatient Starts, that fierce and flaſhing Fire, which he threw into *Hotſpur*, never came from the unruffled Temper of his *Brutus* (for I have, more than once, ſeen a *Brutus* as warm as *Hotſpur*) when the *Betterton Brutus* was provok'd, in his Diſpute with *Caſſius*, his Spirit flew only to his Eye; his ſteady Look alone ſupply'd that Terror, which he diſdain'd an Intemperance in his Voice ſhould riſe to. Thus, with a ſettled Dignity of Contempt, like an unheeding Rock, he repell'd upon himſelf the Foam of *Caſſius*. Perhaps the very Words of *Shakeſpear* will better let you into my Meaning:

Muſt I give way, and room, to your raſh Choler?
Shall I be frighted when a Madman ſtares?

And a little after,

There is no Terror, Caſſius, *in your Looks!* &c.

Not

Not but, in ſome part of this Scene, where he reproaches *Caſſius*, his Temper is not under this Suppreſſion, but opens into that Warmth which becomes a Man of Virtue; yet this is that *Haſty Spark* of Anger, which *Brutus* himſelf endeavours to excuſe.

But with whatever ſtrength of Nature we ſee the Poet ſhew, at once, the Philoſopher and the Heroe, yet the Image of the Actor's Excellence will be ſtill imperfect to you, unleſs Language cou'd put Colours in our Words to paint the Voice with.

Et, ſi vis ſimilem pingere, pinge ſonum, is enjoining an Impoſſibility. The moſt that a *Vandyke* can arrive at, is to make his Portraits of great Perſons ſeem to *think*; a *Shakeſpear* goes farther yet, and tells you *what* his Pictures thought; a *Betterton* ſteps beyond 'em both, and calls them from the Grave, to breathe, and be themſelves again, in Feature, Speech, and Motion. When the skilful Actor ſhews you all theſe Powers united, and gratifies at once your Eye, your Ear, your Underſtanding. To conceive the Pleaſure riſing from ſuch Harmony, you muſt have been preſent at it! 'tis not to be told you!

There cannot be a ſtronger Proof of the Charms of harmonious Elocution, than the many, even unnatural Scenes and Flights of the falſe Sublime it has lifted into Applauſe. In what Raptures have I ſeen an Audience, at the furious Fuſtian and turgid Rants in *Nat. Lee*'s *Alexander the Great!* For though I can allow this Play a few great Beauties, yet it is not without its extravagant Blemiſhes. Every Play of the ſame Author has more or leſs of them. Let me give you a Sample from this. *Alexander*, in a full crowd of Courtiers, without being occaſionally call'd or provok'd to it, falls into this Rhapſody of Vain-glory.

Can none remember? Yes, I know all muſt!

And therefore they ſhall know it agen.

When

When Glory, like the dazzling Eagle, ſtood
Perch'd on my Beaver, in the Granic Flood,
When Fortune's Self, my Standard trembling bore,
And the pale Fates ſtood frighted on the Shore,
When the Immortals on the Billows rode,
And I myſelf appear'd the leading God.

When theſe flowing Numbers came from the Mouth of a *Betterton*, the Multitude no more deſired Senſe to them, than our muſical *Connoiſſeurs* think it eſſential in the celebrate Airs of an *Italian* Opera. Does not this prove, that there is very near as much Enchantment in the well-govern'd Voice of an Actor, as in the ſweet Pipe of an Eunuch? If I tell you, there was no one Tragedy, for many Years, more in favour with the Town than *Alexander*, to what muſt we impute this its command of publick Admiration? Not to its intrinſick Merit, ſurely, if it ſwarms with Paſſages like this I have ſhewn you! If this Paſſage has Merit, let us ſee what Figure it would make upon Canvas, what ſort of Picture would riſe from it. If *Le Brun*, who was famous for painting the Battles of this Heroe, had ſeen this lofty Deſcription, what one Image could he have poſſibly taken from it? In what Colours would he have ſhewn us *Glory perch'd upon a Beaver?* How would he have drawn *Fortune trembling?* Or, indeed, what uſe could he have made of *pale Fates*, or *Immortals* riding upon *Billows*, with this bluſtering *God* of his own making at the *head* of 'em? Where, then, muſt have lain the Charm, that once made the Publick ſo partial to this Tragedy? Why plainly, in the Grace and Harmony of the Actor's Utterance. For the Actor himſelf is not accountable for the falſe Poetry of his Author; That, the Hearer is to judge of; if it paſſes upon him, the Actor can have no Quarrel to it; who, if the Periods given him are round, ſmooth, ſpirited, and high-ſounding, even in a falſe Paſſion, muſt throw out the ſame Fire and Grace, as may be required in one juſtly riſing

riſing from Nature; where thoſe his Excellencies will then be only more pleaſing, in proportion to the Taſte of his Hearer. And I am of opinion, that to the extraordinary Succeſs of this very Play, we may impute the Corruption of ſo many Actors, and Tragick Writers, as were immediately miſled by it. The unskilful Actor, who imagin'd all the Merit of delivering thoſe blazing Rants, lay only in the Strength, and ſtrain'd Exertion of the Voice, began to tear his Lungs, upon every falſe, or ſlight Occaſion, to arrive at the ſame Applauſe. And it is from hence I date our having ſeen the ſame Reaſon prevalent, for above fifty Years. Thus equally miſguided too, many a barren-brain'd Author has ſtream'd into a frothy flowing Style, pompouſly rolling into ſounding Periods, ſignifying ----- roundly nothing; of which Number, in ſome of my former Labours, I am ſomething more than ſuſpicious, that I may myſelf have made one. But, to keep a little cloſer to *Betterton.*

When this favourite Play I am ſpeaking of, from its being too frequently acted, was worn out, and came to be deſerted by the Town, upon the ſudden Death of *Monfort*, who had play'd *Alexander* with Succeſs, for ſeveral Years, the Part was given to *Betterton*, which, under this great Diſadvantage of the Satiety it had given, he immediately reviv'd, with ſo new a Luſtre, that for three Days together it fill'd the Houſe; and had his then declining Strength been equal to the Fatigue the Action gave him, it probably might have doubled its Succeſs; an uncommon Inſtance of the Power and intrinſick Merit of an Actor. This I mention, not only to prove what irreſiſtable Pleaſure may ariſe from a judicious Elocution, with ſcarce Senſe to aſſiſt it; but to ſhew you too, that tho' *Betterton* never wanted Fire, and Force, when his Character demanded it; yet, where it was not demanded, he never proſtituted his Power to the low Ambition of a falſe Applauſe. And further, that when, from a too advanced Age, he reſign'd that toilſome Part of *Alexander*, the Play, for many Years after, never was able to impoſe upon

the Publick; and I look upon his ſo particularly ſupporting the falſe Fire and Extravagancies of that Character, to be a more ſurprizing Proof of his Skill, than his being eminent in thoſe of *Shakeſpear*; becauſe there, Truth and Nature coming to his Aſſiſtance, he had not the ſame Difficulties to combat, and conſequently, we muſt be leſs amaz'd at his Succeſs, where we are more able to account for it.

Notwithſtanding the extraordinary Power he ſhew'd in blowing *Alexander* once more into a blaze of Admiration, *Betterton* had ſo juſt a Senſe of what was true, or falſe Applauſe, that I have heard him ſay, he never thought any kind of it equal to an attentive Silence; that there were many ways of deceiving an Audience into a loud one; but to keep them huſht and quiet, was an Applauſe which only Truth and Merit could arrive at: Of which Art, there never was an equal Maſter to himſelf. From theſe various Excellencies, he had ſo full a Poſſeſſion of the Eſteem and Regard of his Auditors, that upon his Entrance into every Scene, he ſeem'd to ſeize upon the Eyes and Ears of the Giddy and Inadvertent! To have talk'd, or look'd another way, would then have been thought Inſenſibility, or Ignorance. In all his Soliloquies of moment, the ſtrong Intelligence of his Attitude and Aſpect, drew you into ſuch an impatient Gaze, and eager Expectation, that you almoſt imbib'd the Sentiment with your Eye, before the Ear could reach it.

As *Betterton* is the Centre to which all my Obſervations upon Action tend, you will give me leave, under his Character, to enlarge upon that Head. In the juſt Delivery of Poetical Numbers, particularly where the Sentiments are pathetick, it is ſcarce credible, upon how minute an Article of Sound depends their greateſt Beauty or Inaffection. The Voice of a Singer is not more ſtrictly ty'd to Time and Tune, than that of an Actor in Theatrical Elocution: The leaſt Syllable too long, or too ſlightly dwelt upon, in a Period, depreciates it to nothing; which very Syllable, if rightly touch'd, ſhall, like the heightening

Stroke

Stroke of Light from a Maſter's Pencil, give Life and Spirit to the whole. I never heard a Line in Tragedy come from *Betterton*, wherein my Judgment, my Ear, and my Imagination, were not fully ſatisfy'd; which, ſince his Time, I cannot equally ſay of any one Actor whatſoever: Not but it is poſſible to be much his Inferior, with great Excellencies; which I ſhall obſerve in another Place. Had it been practicable to have ty'd down the clattering Hands of all the ill Judges who were commonly the Majority of an Audience, to what amazing Perfection might the *Engliſh* Theatre have arriv'd, with ſo juſt an Actor as *Betterton* at the Head of it! If what was Truth only, could have been applauded, how many noiſy Actors had ſhook their Plumes with Shame, who, from the injudicious Approbation of the Multitude, have bawl'd and ſtrutted, in the place of Merit? If therefore the bare ſpeaking Voice has ſuch Allurements in it, how much leſs ought we to wonder, however we may lament, that the ſweeter Notes of Vocal Muſick ſhould ſo have captivated even the politer World, into an Apoſtacy from Senſe, to an Idolatry of Sound. Let us enquire from whence this Enchantment riſes. I am afraid it may be too naturally accounted for: For when we complain, that the fineſt Muſick, purchas'd at ſuch vaſt Expence, is ſo often thrown away upon the moſt miſerable Poetry, we ſeem not to conſider, that when the Movement of the Air, and Tone of the Voice, are exquiſitely harmonious, tho' we regard not one *Word* of what we hear, yet the Power of the Melody is ſo buſy in the Heart, that we naturally annex Ideas to it of our own Creation, and, in ſome ſort, become our ſelves the Poet to the Compoſer; and what Poet is ſo dull as not to be charm'd with the Child of his own Fancy? So that there is even a kind of Language in agreeable Sounds, which, like the Aſpect of Beauty, without Words, ſpeaks and plays with the Imagination. While this Taſte therefore is ſo naturally prevalent, I doubt, to propoſe Remedies for it, were but giving Laws to the Winds, or Advice to Inamo-

rato's: And however gravely we may aſſert, that Profit ought always to be inſeparable from the Delight of the Theatre; nay admitting that the Pleaſure would be heighten'd by the uniting them; yet, while Inſtruction is ſo little the Concern of the Auditor, how can we hope that ſo choice a Commodity will come to a Market where there is ſo ſeldom a Demand for it?

It is not to the Actor therefore, but to the vitiated and low Taſte of the Spectator, that the Corruptions of the Stage (of what kind ſoever) have been owing. If the Publick, by whom they muſt live, had Spirit enough to diſcountenance, and declare againſt all the Traſh and Fopperies they have been ſo frequently fond of, both the Actors, and the Authors, to the beſt of their Power, muſt naturally have ſerv'd their daily Table, with ſound and wholeſome Diet. --- But I have not yet done with my Article of Elocution.

As we have ſometimes great Compoſers of Muſick, who cannot ſing, we have as frequently great Writers that cannot read; and tho', without the niceſt Ear, no Man can be Maſter of Poetical Numbers, yet the beſt Ear in the World will not always enable him to pronounce them. Of this Truth, *Dryden*, our firſt great Maſter of Verſe and Harmony, was a ſtrong Inſtance: When he brought his Play of *Amphytrion* to the Stage, I heard him give it his firſt Reading to the Actors, in which, though it is true, he deliver'd the plain Senſe of every Period, yet the whole was in ſo cold, ſo flat, and unaffecting a manner, that I am afraid of not being believ'd, when I affirm it.

On the contrary, *Lee*, far his Inferior in Poetry, was ſo pathetick a Reader of his own Scenes, that I have been inform'd by an Actor, who was preſent, that while *Lee* was reading to Major *Mohun* at a Rehearſal, *Mohun*, in the Warmth of his Admiration, threw down his Part, and ſaid, Unleſs I were able to *play* it, as well as you *read* it, to what purpoſe ſhould I undertake it? And yet this very Author, whoſe Elocution rais'd ſuch Admiration in ſo capital an Actor, when he attempted to be

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an Actor himſelf, ſoon quitted the Stage, in an honeſt Deſpair of ever making any profitable Figure there. From all this I would infer, That let our Conception of what we are to ſpeak, be ever ſo juſt, and the Ear ever ſo true, yet, when we are to deliver it to an Audience (I will leave Fear out of the queſtion) there muſt go along with the whole, a natural Freedom, and becoming Grace, which is eaſier to conceive than to deſcribe: For without this inexpreſſible ſomewhat, the Performance will come out oddly diſguis'd, or ſomewhere defectively, unſurprizing to the Hearer. Of this Defect too, I will give you yet a ſtranger Inſtance, which you will allow Fear could not be the Occaſion of: If you remember *Eſtcourt*, you muſt have known that he was long enough upon the Stage, not to be under the leaſt Reſtraint from Fear, in his Performance: This Man was ſo amazing and extraordinary a Mimick, that no Man or Woman, from the Coquette to the Privy-Counſellor, ever mov'd or ſpoke before him, but he could carry their Voice, Look, Mien, and Motion, inſtantly into another Company: I have heard him make long Harangues, and form various Arguments, even in the manner of thinking, of an eminent Pleader at the Bar, with every the leaſt Article and Singularity of his Utterance ſo perfectly imitated, that he was the very *alter ipſe*, ſcarce to be diſtinguiſh'd from his Original. Yet more; I have ſeen, upon the Margin of the written Part of *Falſtaff*, which he acted, his own Notes and Obſervations upon almoſt every Speech of it, deſcribing the true Spirit of the Humour, and with what tone of Voice, look, and Geſture, each of them ought to be delivered. Yet in his Execution upon the Stage, he ſeem'd to have loſt all thoſe juſt Ideas he had form'd of it, and almoſt thro' the Character, labour'd under a heavy Load of Flatneſs: In a word, with all his Skill in Mimickry, and Knowledge of what ought to be done, he never, upon the Stage, could bring it truly into Practice, but was upon the whole, a languid, unaffecting Actor. After I have ſhewn you ſo many neceſſary Qualifications, not one of

of which can be ſpar'd in true Theatrical Elocution, and have at the ſame time prov'd, that with the Aſſiſtance of them all united, the whole may ſtill come forth defective; what Talents ſhall we ſay will infallibly form an Actor? This, I confeſs, is one of Nature's Secrets, too deep for me to dive into; let us content our ſelves therefore with affirming, That *Genius*, which Nature only gives, only can complete him. This *Genius* then was ſo ſtrong in *Betterton*, that it ſhone out in every Speech and Motion of him. Yet Voice, and Perſon, are ſuch neceſſary Supports to it, that, by the Multitude, they have been preferr'd to *Genius* itſelf, or at leaſt often miſtaken for it. *Betterton* had a Voice of that kind, which gave more Spirit to Terror, than to the ſofter Paſſions; of more Strength than Melody. The Rage and Jealouſy of *Othello*, became him better than the Sighs and Tenderneſs of *Caſtalio*: For tho' in *Caſtalio* he only excell'd others, in *Othello* he excell'd himſelf; which you will eaſily believe, when you conſider, that in ſpite of his Complexion, *Othello* has more natural Beauties than the beſt Actor can find in all the Magazine of Poetry, to animate his Power, and delight his Judgment with.

The Perſon of this excellent Actor was ſuitable to his Voice, more manly than ſweet, not exceeding the middle Stature, inclining to the corpulent; of a ſerious and penetrating Aſpect; his Limbs nearer the athletick, than the delicate Proportion; yet however form'd, there aroſe from the Harmony of the whole a commanding Mien of Majeſty, which the fairer-fac'd, or (as *Shakeſpear* calls 'em) the *curled* Darlings of his Time, ever wanted ſomething to be equal Maſters of. There was ſome Years ago, to be had, almoſt in every Print-ſhop, a *Metzotinto*, from *Kneller*, extremely like him.

In all I have ſaid of *Betterton*, I confine my ſelf to the Time of his Strength, and higheſt Power in Action, that you may make Allowances from what he was able to execute at fifty, to what you might have ſeen of him at paſt ſeventy; for tho' to the laſt

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he was without his equal, he might not then be equal to his former ſelf; yet ſo far was he from being ever overtaken, that for many Years after his deceaſe, I ſeldom ſaw any of his Parts, in *Shakeſpear*, ſupply'd by others, but it drew from me the Lamentation of *Ophelia* upon *Hamlet*'s being unlike, what ſhe had ſeen him.

------- *Ah! woe is me!*
T' have ſeen, what I have *ſeen, ſee what I ſee!*

The laſt Part this great Maſter of his Profeſſion acted, was *Melantius* in the *Maid's Tragedy*, for his own Benefit; when being ſuddenly ſeiz'd by the Gout, he ſubmitted, by extraordinary Applications, to have his Foot ſo far reliev'd, that he might be able to walk on the Stage, in a Slipper, rather than wholly diſappoint his Auditors. He was obſerv'd that Day, to have exerted a more than ordinary Spirit, and met with ſuitable Applauſe; but the unhappy Conſequence of tampering with his Diſtemper was, that it flew into his Head, and kill'd him in three Days, (I think) in the ſeventy-fourth Year of his Age.

I once thought to have fill'd up my Work with a ſelect Diſſertation upon Theatrical Action, but I find, by the Digreſſions I have been tempted to make in this Account of *Betterton*, that all I can ſay upon that Head, will naturally fall in, and poſſibly be leſs tedious, if diſpers'd among the various Characters of the particular Actors, I have promis'd to treat of; I ſhall therefore make uſe of thoſe ſeveral Vehicles, which you will find waiting in the next Chapter, to carry you through the reſt of the Journey, at your Leiſure.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Theatrical Characters of the Principal Actors, in the Year 1690, *continu'd.*

A few Words to Critical Auditors.

THO', as I have before obſerv'd, Women were not admitted to the Stage, 'till the Return of King *Charles*, yet it could not be ſo ſuddenly ſupply'd with them, but that there was ſtill a Neceſſity, for ſome time, to put the handſomeſt young Men into Petticoats; which *Kynaſton* was then ſaid to have worn, with Succeſs; particularly in the Part of *Evadne*, in the *Maid's Tragedy*, which I have heard him ſpeak of; and which calls to my Mind a ridiculous Diſtreſs that aroſe from theſe ſort of Shifts, which the Stage was then put to--- The King coming a little before his uſual time to a Tragedy, found the Actors not ready to begin, when his Majeſty not chuſing to have as much Patience as his good Subjects, ſent to them, to know the Meaning of it; upon which the Maſter of the Company came to the Box, and rightly judging, that the beſt Excuſe for their Default, would be the true one, fairly told his Majeſty, that the Queen was not *ſhav'd* yet: The King, whoſe good Humour lov'd to laugh at a Jeſt, as well as to make one, accepted the Excuſe, which ſerv'd to divert him, till the male Queen cou'd be effeminated. In a word, *Kynaſton*, at that time was ſo beautiful a Youth, that the Ladies of Quality prided themſelves in taking him with them in their Coaches, to *Hyde-Park*, in his Theatrical Habit, after the Play; which in thoſe Days, they might have ſufficient time to do, becauſe Plays then, were us'd to begin at four a-Clock; The Hour that People of the ſame Rank, are now going to Dinner--- Of this Truth, I had the Curioſity to enquire, and had it con-

confirm'd from his own Mouth, in his advanc'd Age: And indeed, to the laſt of him, his handſomeneſs was very little abated; ev'n at paſt ſixty, his Teeth were all ſound, white, and even, as one would wiſh to ſee, in a reigning Toaſt of twenty. He had ſomething of a formal Gravity in his Mien, which was attributed to the ſtately Step he had been ſo early confin'd to, in a female Decency. But ev'n that, in Characters of Superiority had its proper Graces; it misbecame him not in the Part of *Leon*, in *Fletcher*'s *Rule a Wife*, *&c.* which he executed with a determin'd Manlineſs, and honeſt Authority, well worth the beſt Actor's Imitation. He had a piercing Eye, and in Characters of heroick Life, a quick imperious Vivacity, in his Tone of Voice, that painted the Tyrant truly terrible. There were two Plays of *Dryden* in which he ſhone, with uncommon Luſtre; in *Aurenge-Zebe* he play'd *Morat*, and in *Don Sebaſtian*, *Muley Moloch*; in both theſe Parts, he had a fierce, Lion-like Majeſty in his Port and Utterance, that gave the Spectator a kind of trembling Admiration!

Here I cannot help obſerving upon a modeſt Miſtake, which I thought the late Mr. *Booth* commited in his acting the Part of *Morat:* There are in this fierce Character ſo many Sentiments of avow'd Barbarity, Inſolence, and Vain-glory, that they blaze even to a ludicrous Luſtre, and doubtleſs the Poet intended thoſe to make his Spectators laugh, while they admir'd them; but *Booth* thought it depreciated the Dignity of Tragedy to raiſe a Smile, in any part of it, and therefore cover'd theſe kind of Sentiments with a ſcrupulous Coldneſs, and unmov'd Delivery, as if he had fear'd the Audience might take too familiar a Notice of them. In Mr. *Addiſon*'s *Cato*, *Syphax* has ſome Sentiments of near the ſame Nature, which I ventur'd to ſpeak, as I imagin'd *Kynaſton* would have done, had he been then living to have ſtood in the ſame Character. Mr. *Addiſon*, who had ſomething of Mr. *Booth*'s Diffidence, at the Rehearſal of his Play, after it was acted, came into my Opinion, and own'd, that even Tragedy, on ſuch particular Occaſions might admit of a *Laugh* of

Approbation. In *Shakeſpear* Inſtances of them are frequent, as in *Mackbeth*, *Hotſpur*, *Richard* the *Third*, and *Harry* the *Eighth*, all which Characters, tho' of a tragical Caſt, have ſometimes familiar Strokes in them, ſo highly natural to each particular Diſpoſition, that it is impoſſible not to be tranſported into an honeſt Laughter at them: And theſe are thoſe happy Liberties, which tho' few Authors are qualify'd to take, yet when juſtly taken, may challenge a Place among their greateſt Beauties. Now whether *Dryden* in his *Morat*, *feliciter Audet*--- or may be allow'd the Happineſs of having hit this Mark, ſeems not neceſſary to be determin'd by the Actor; whoſe Buſineſs, ſure, is to make the beſt of his Author's Intention, as in this Part *Kynaſton* did, doubtleſs not without *Dryden*'s Approbation. For theſe Reaſons then, I thought my good Friend, Mr. *Booth* (who certainly had many Excellencies) carry'd his Reverence for the Buskin too far, in not following the bold Flights of the Author, with that Wantonneſs of Spirit which the Nature of thoſe Sentiments demanded: For Example! *Morat* having a criminal Paſſion for *Indamora*, promiſes, at her Requeſt, for one Day, to ſpare the Life of her Lover *Aurenge-Zebe:* But not chuſing to make known the real Motive of his Mercy, when *Nourmahal* ſays to him,

'Twill not be ſafe to let him live an Hour!

Morat ſilences her with this heroical *Rhodomontade*,

I'll do't, to ſhew my Arbitrary Power.

Riſum teneatis? It was impoſſible not to laugh, and reaſonably too, when this Line came out of the Mouth of *Kynaſton*, with the ſtern, and haughty Look, that attended it. But above this tyrannical, tumid Superiority of Character, there is a grave, and rational Majeſty in *Shakeſpear*'s *Harry* the Fourth, which tho' not ſo glaring to the vulgar Eye, requires thrice the Skill, and Grace to become, and ſupport. Of this real Majeſty *Kynaſton* was entirely Maſter; here every Sentiment came from him, as if it

it had been his own, as if he had himſelf, that inſtant, conceiv'd it, as if he had loſt the Player, and were the real King he perſonated! a Perfection ſo rarely found, that very often, in Actors of good Repute, a certain Vacancy of Look, Inanity of Voice, or ſuperfluous Geſture, ſhall unmask the Man, to the judicious Spectator; who from the leaſt of thoſe Errors plainly ſees, the whole but a Leſſon given him, to be got by Heart, from ſome great Author, whoſe Senſe is deeper than the Repeater's Underſtanding. This true Majeſty *Kynaſton* had ſo entire a Command of, that when he whiſper'd the following plain Line to *Hotſpur*,

Send us your Priſoners, or you'll hear of it!

He convey'd a more terrible Menace in it than the loudeſt Intemperance of Voice could ſwell to. But let the bold Imitator beware, for without the Look, and juſt Elocution that waited on it, an Attempt of the ſame nature may fall to nothing.

But the Dignity of this Character appear'd in *Kynaſton* ſtill more ſhining, in the private Scene between the King, and Prince his Son: There you ſaw Majeſty, in that ſort of Grief, which only Majeſty could feel! there the paternal Concern, for the Errors of the Son, made the Monarch more rever'd, and dreaded: His Reproaches ſo juſt, yet ſo unmixt with Anger (and therefore the more piercing) opening as it were the Arms of Nature, with a ſecret Wiſh, that filial Duty, and Penitence awak'd, might fall into them with Grace and Honour. In this affecting Scene I thought *Kynaſton* ſhew'd his moſt maſterly Strokes of Nature; expreſſing all the various Motions of the Heart, with the ſame Force, Dignity, and Feeling they are written; adding to the whole, that peculiar, and becoming Grace, which the beſt Writer cannot inſpire into any Actor, that is not born with it. What made the Merit of this Actor, and that of *Betterton* more ſurprizing, was, that though they both obſerv'd the Rules of Truth, and Nature, they were each as different in their manner of acting, as in their

perſonal Form, and Features. But *Kynaſton* ſtaid too long upon the Stage, till his Memory and Spirit began to fail him. I ſhall not therefore ſay any thing of his Imperfections, which, at that time, were viſibly not his own, but the Effects of decaying Nature.

Monfort, a younger Man by twenty Years, and at this time in his higheſt Reputation, was an Actor of a very different Style: Of Perſon he was tall, well made, fair, and of an agreeable Aſpect: His Voice clear, full, and melodious: In Tragedy he was the moſt affecting Lover within my Memory. His Addreſſes had a reſiſtleſs Recommendation from the very Tone of his Voice, which gave his Words ſuch Softneſs, that, as *Dryden* ſays,

----- Like Flakes of feather'd Snow,
They melted as they fell! ----

All this he particularly verify'd in that Scene of *Alexander*, where the Heroe throws himſelf at the Feet of *Statira* for Pardon of his paſt Infidelities. There we ſaw the Great, the Tender, the Penitent, the Deſpairing, the Tranſported, and the Amiable, in the higheſt Perfection. In Comedy, he gave the trueſt Life to what we call the *Fine Gentleman*; his Spirit ſhone the brighter for being poliſh'd with Decency: In Scenes of Gaiety, he never broke into the Regard, that was due to the Preſence of equal, or ſuperior Characters, tho' inferior Actors play'd them; he fill'd the Stage, not by elbowing, and croſſing it before others, or diſconcerting their Action, but by ſurpaſſing them, in true and maſterly Touches of Nature. He never laugh'd at his own Jeſt, unleſs the Point of his Raillery upon another requir'd it--- He had a particular Talent, in giving Life to *bons Mots* and *Repartees:* The Wit of the Poet ſeem'd always to come from him *extempore*, and ſharpen'd into more Wit, from his brillant manner of delivering it; he had himſelf a good Share of it, or what is equal to it, ſo lively a Pleaſantneſs of Humour, that when either of theſe fell into his Hands upon the Stage, he wantoned

wantoned with them, to the higheſt delight of his Auditors. The *agreeable* was ſo natural to him, that ev'en in that diſſolute Character of the *Rover* he ſeem'd to waſh off the guilt from Vice, and gave it Charms and Merit. For tho' it may be a Reproach to the Poet, to draw ſuch Characters, not only unpuniſh'd, but rewarded; the Actor may ſtill be allow'd his due Praiſe in his excellent Performance. And this is a Diſtinction which, when this Comedy was acted at *Whitehall*, King *William*'s Queen *Mary* was pleas'd to make in favour of *Monfort*, notwithſtanding her Diſapprobation of the Play.

He had beſides all this, a Variety in his Genius, which few capital Actors have ſhewn, or perhaps have thought it any Addition to their Merit to arrive at; he could entirely change himſelf; could at once throw off the Man of Senſe, for the brisk, vain, rude, and lively Coxcomb, the falſe, flaſhy Pretender to Wit, and the Dupe of his own Sufficiency: Of this he gave a delightful Inſtance in the Character of *Sparkiſh* in *Wycherly*'s *Country Wife*. In that of Sir *Courtly Nice* his Excellence was ſtill greater: There his whole Man, Voice, Mien, and Geſture, was no longer *Monfort*, but another Perſon. There, the inſipid, ſoft Civility, the elegant, and formal Mien; the drawling Delicacy of Voice, the ſtately Flatneſs of his Addreſs, and the empty Eminence of his Attitudes were ſo nicely obſerv'd and guarded by him, that he had not been an entire Maſter of Nature, had he not kept his Judgment, as it were, a Centinel upon himſelf, not to admit the leaſt Likeneſs of what he us'd to be, to enter into any Part of his Performance, he could not poſſibly have ſo completely finiſh'd it. If, ſome Years after the Death of *Monfort*, I my ſelf had any Succeſs, in either of theſe Characters, I muſt pay the Debt, I owe to his Memory, in confeſſing the Advantages I receiv'd from the juſt Idea, and ſtrong Impreſſion he had given me, from his acting them. Had he been remember'd, when I firſt attempted them, my Defects would have been more eaſily diſcover'd, and conſequently my favourable Reception in

them,

them, muſt have been very much, and juſtly abated. If it could be remembred how much he had the Advantage of me, in Voice and Perſon, I could not, here, be ſuſpected of an affected Modeſty, or of over-valuing his Excellence: For he ſung a clear Counter-tenour, and had a melodious, warbling Throat, which could not but ſet off the laſt Scene of Sir *Courtly* with an uncommon Happineſs; which I, alas! could only ſtruggle thro', with the faint Excuſes, and real Confidence of a fine Singer, under the Imperfection of a feign'd, and ſcreaming Trebble, which at beſt could only ſhew you what I would have done, had Nature been more favourable to me.

This excellent Actor was cut off by a tragical Death, in the 33d Year of his Age, generally lamented by his Friends, and all Lovers of the Theatre. The particular Accidents that attended his Fall, are to be found at large in the Trial of the Lord *Mohun*, printed among thoſe of the State, in *Folio.*

Sandford might properly be term'd the *Spagnolet* of the Theatre, an excellent Actor in diſagreeable Characters: For as the chief Pieces of that famous Painter were of Human Nature in Pain and Agony; ſo *Sandford*, upon the Stage, was generally as flagitious as a *Creon*, a *Maligni*, an *Iago*, or a *Machiavil*, could make him. The Painter, 'tis true, from the Fire of his Genius might think the quiet Objects of Nature too tame for his Pencil, and therefore choſe to indulge it in its full Power, upon thoſe of Violence and Horror: But poor *Sandford* was not the Stage-Villain by Choice, but from Neceſſity; for having a low and crooked Perſon, ſuch bodily Defects were too ſtrong to be admitted into great, or amiable Characters; ſo that whenever, in any new or revived Play, there was a hateful or miſchievous Perſon, *Sandford* was ſure to have no Competitor for it: Nor indeed (as we are not to ſuppoſe a Villain, or Traitor can be ſhewn for our Imitation, or not for our Abhorrence) can it be doubted, but the leſs comely the Actor's Perſon, the fitter he may be to perform them. The Spectator too, by not being miſled by a tempting

ing Form, may be leſs inclin'd to excuſe the wicked or immoral Views or Sentiments of them. And though the hard Fate of an *Oedipus*, might naturally give the Humanity of an Audience thrice the Pleaſure that could ariſe from the wilful Wickedneſs of the beſt acted *Creon*; yet who could ſay that *Sandford*, in ſuch a Part, was not Maſter of as true and juſt Action, as the beſt Tragedian could be, whoſe happier Perſon had recommended him to the virtuous Heroe, or any other more pleaſing Favourite of the Imagination? In this diſadvantageous Light, then, ſtood *Sandford*, as an Actor; admir'd by the Judicious, while the Crowd only prais'd him by their Prejudice. And ſo unuſual had it been to ſee *Sandford* an innocent Man in a Play, that whenever he was ſo, the Spectators would hardly give him Credit in ſo groſs an Improbability. Let me give you an odd Inſtance of it, which I heard *Monfort* ſay was a real Fact. A new Play (the Name of it I have forgot) was brought upon the Stage, wherein *Sandford* happen'd to perform the Part of an honeſt Stateſman: The Pit, after they had ſate three or four Acts, in a quiet Expectation, that the well-diſſembled Honeſty of *Sandford* (for ſuch of courſe they concluded it) would ſoon be diſcover'd, or at leaſt, from its Security, involve the Actors in the Play, in ſome ſurprizing Diſtreſs or Confuſion, which might raiſe, and animate the Scenes to come; when, at laſt, finding no ſuch matter, but that the Cataſtrophe had taken quite another Turn, and that *Sandford* was really an honeſt Man to the end of the Play, they fairly damn'd it, as if the Author had impos'd upon them the moſt frontleſs or incredible Abſurdity.

It is not improbable, but that from *Sandford*'s ſo maſterly perſonating Characters of Guilt, the inferior Actors might think his Succeſs chiefly owing to the Defects of his Perſon; and from thence might take occaſion, whenever they appear'd as Bravo's, or Murtherers, to make themſelves as frightful and as inhuman Figures, as poſſible. In King *Charles*'s time, this low Skill was carry'd

carry'd to ſuch an Extravagance, that the King himſelf, who was black-brow'd, and of a ſwarthy Complexion, paſs'd a pleaſant Remark, upon his obſerving the grim Looks of the Murtherers in *Macbeth*; when, turning to his People, in the Box about him, *Pray, what is the Meaning*, ſaid he, *that we never ſee a Rogue in a Play, but, Godsfiſh! they always clap him on a black Perriwig? when, it is well known, one of the greateſt Rogues in* England *always wears a fair one?* Now, whether or no Dr. *Oates*, at that time, wore his own Hair, I cannot be poſitive: Or, if his Majeſty pointed at ſome greater Man, then out of Power, I leave thoſe to gueſs at him, who, may yet, remember the changing Complexion of his Miniſters. This Story I had from *Betterton*, who was a Man of Veracity: And, I confeſs, I ſhould have thought the King's Obſervation a very juſt one, though he himſelf had been fair as *Adonis*. Nor can I, in this Queſtion, help voting with the Court; for were it not too groſs a Weakneſs to employ, in wicked Purpoſes, Men, whoſe very ſuſpected Looks might be enough to betray them? Or are we to ſuppoſe it unnatural, that a Murther ſhould be thoroughly committed out of an old red Coat, and a black Perriwig?

For my own part, I profeſs myſelf to have been an Admirer of *Sandford*, and have often lamented, that his maſterly Performance could not be rewarded with that Applauſe, which I ſaw much inferior Actors met with, merely becauſe they ſtood in more laudable Characters. For, tho' it may be a Merit in an Audience, to applaud Sentiments of Virtue and Honour; yet there ſeems to be an equal Juſtice, that no Diſtinction ſhould be made, as to the Excellence of an Actor, whether in a good or evil Character; ſince neither the Vice, nor the Virtue of it, is his own, but given him by the Poet: Therefore, why is not the Actor who ſhines in either, equally commendable?----- No, Sir; this may be Reaſon, but that is not always a Rule with us; the Spectator will tell you, that when Virtue is applauded, he gives

gives part of it to himſelf; becauſe his Applauſe, at the ſame time, lets others about him ſee, that he himſelf admires it. But when a wicked Action is going forward; when an *Iago* is meditating Revenge, and Miſchief; tho' Art and Nature may be equally ſtrong in the Actor, the Spectator is ſhy of his Applauſe, leſt he ſhould, in ſome ſort, be look'd upon as an Aider or an Abettor of the Wickedneſs in view; and therefore rather chuſes to rob the Actor of the Praiſe he may merit, than give it him in a Character, which he would have you ſee his Silence modeſtly diſcourages. From the ſame fond Principle, many Actors have made it a Point to be ſeen in Parts ſometimes, even flatly written, only becauſe they ſtood in the favourable Light of Honour and Virtue.

I have formerly known an Actreſs carry this Theatrical Prudery to ſuch a height, that ſhe was, very near, keeping herſelf chaſte by it: Her Fondneſs for Virtue on the Stage, ſhe began to think, might perſwade the World, that it had made an Impreſſion on her private Life; and the Appearances of it actually went ſo far, that, in an Epilogue to an obſcure Play, the Profits of which were given to her, and wherein ſhe acted a Part of impregnable Chaſtity, ſhe beſpoke the Favour of the Ladies, by a Proteſtation, that in Honour of their Goodneſs and Virtue, ſhe would dedicate her unblemiſh'd Life to their Example. Part of this Veſtal Vow, I remember, was contain'd in the following Verſe:

Study to live the Character I play.

But alas! how weak are the ſtrongeſt Works of Art, when Nature beſieges it! for though this good Creature ſo far held out her Diſtaſte to Mankind, that they could never reduce her to marry any one of 'em; yet we muſt own ſhe grew, like *Cæſar*, greater by her Fall! Her firſt heroick Motive, to a Surrender, was to ſave the Life of a Lover, who, in his Deſpair, had vow'd to deſtroy himſelf, with which Act of Mercy (in a jealous Diſ-

pute once, in my hearing) ſhe was provok'd to reproach him in theſe very Words; *Villain! did not I ſave your Life?* The generous Lover, in return to that firſt tender Obligation, gave Life to her Firſt-born, and that pious Offspring has, ſince, rais'd to her Memory, ſeveral innocent Grand-children.

So that, as we ſee, it is not the Hood, that makes the Monk, nor the Veil the Veſtal; I am apt to think, that if the Perſonal Morals of an Actor, were to be weighed by his Appearance on the Stage, the Advantage and Favour (if any were due to either ſide) might rather incline to the Traitor, than the Heroe, to the *Sempronius*, than the *Cato*; or to the *Syphax*, than the *Juba*: Becauſe no Man can naturally deſire to cover his Honeſty with a wicked Appearance; but an ill Man might poſſibly incline to cover his Guilt with the Appearance of Virtue, which was the Caſe of the frail Fair One, now mentioned. But be this Queſtion decided as it may, *Sandford* always appeared to me the honeſter Man, in proportion to the Spirit wherewith he expos'd the wicked, and immoral Characters he acted: For had his Heart been unfound, or tainted with the leaſt Guilt of them, his Conſcience muſt, in ſpite of him, in any too near a Reſemblance of himſelf, have been a Check upon the Vivacity of his Action. *Sandford*, therefore, might be ſaid to have contributed his equal Share, with the foremoſt Actors, to the true and laudable Uſe of the Stage: And in this Light too, of being ſo frequently the Object of common Diſtaſte, we may honeſtly ſtyle him a Theatrical Martyr, to Poetical Juſtice: For in making Vice odious, or Virtue amiable, where does the Merit differ? To hate the one, or love the other, are but leading Steps to the ſame Temple of Fame, tho' at different Portals.

This Actor, in his manner of Speaking, varied very much from thoſe I have already mentioned. His Voice had an acute and piercing Tone, which ſtruck every Syllable of his Words diſtinctly upon the Ear. He had likewiſe a peculiar Skill in his Look of marking out to an Audience whatever he judg'd worth their more

more than ordinary Notice. When he deliver'd a Command, he would ſometimes give it more Force, by ſeeming to ſlight the Ornament of Harmony. In *Dryden*'s Plays of Rhime, he as little as poſſible glutted the Ear with the Jingle of it, rather chuſing, when the Senſe would permit him, to loſe it, than to value it.

Had *Sandford* liv'd in *Shakeſpear*'s Time, I am confident his Judgment muſt have choſe him, above all other Actors, to have play'd his *Richard the Third:* I leave his Perſon out of the Queſtion, which, tho' naturally made for it, yet that would have been the leaſt part of his Recommendation; *Sandford* had ſtronger Claims to it; he had ſometimes an uncouth Statelineſs in his Motion, a harſh and ſullen Pride of Speech, a meditating Brow, a ſtern Aſpect, occaſionally changing into an almoſt ludicrous Triumph over all Goodneſs and Virtue: From thence falling into the moſt aſſwaſive Gentleneſs, and ſoothing Candour of a deſigning Heart. Theſe, I ſay, muſt have preferr'd him to it; theſe would have been Colours ſo eſſentially ſhining in that Character, that it will be no Diſpraiſe to that great Author, to ſay, *Sandford* muſt have ſhewn as many maſterly Strokes in it (had he ever acted it) as are viſible in the Writing it.

When I firſt brought *Richard the Third* (with ſuch Alterations as I thought not improper) to the Stage, *Sandford* was engag'd in the Company then acting under King *William*'s Licence in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*; otherwiſe you cannot but ſuppoſe my Intereſt muſt have offer'd him that Part. What encourag'd me, therefore, to attempt it myſelf at the *Theatre-Royal*, was, that I imagin'd I knew how *Sandford* would have ſpoken every Line of it: If therefore, in any Part of it, I ſucceeded, let the Merit be given to him: And how far I ſucceeded in that Light, thoſe only can be Judges who remember him. In order, therefore, to give you a nearer Idea of *Sandford*, you muſt give me leave (compell'd as I am to be vain) to tell you, that the late Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who was an Admirer of *Sandford*, after he

had ſeen me act it, aſſur'd me, That he never knew any one Actor ſo particularly profit by another, as I had done by *Sandford* in *Richard the Third: You have*, ſaid he, *his very Look, Geſture, Gait, Speech, and every Motion of him, and have borrow'd them all, only to ſerve you in that Character.* If therefore Sir *John Vanbrugh*'s Obſervation was juſt, they who remember me in *Richard the Third*, may have a nearer Conception of *Sandford*, than from all the critical Account I can give of him.

I come now to thoſe other Men Actors, who, at this time, were equally famous in the lower Life of Comedy. But I find myſelf more at a loſs to give you them, in their true and proper Light, than Thoſe I have already ſet before you. Why the Tragedian warms us into Joy, or Admiration, or ſets our Eyes on flow with Pity, we can eaſily explain to another's Apprehenſion: But it may ſometimes puzzle the graveſt Spectator to account for that familiar Violence of Laughter, that ſhall ſeize him, at ſome particular Strokes of a true Comedian. How then ſhall I deſcribe what a better Judge might not be able to expreſs? The Rules to pleaſe the Fancy cannot ſo eaſily be laid down, as thoſe that ought to govern the Judgment. The Decency too, that muſt be obſerv'd in Tragedy, reduces, by the manner of ſpeaking it, one Actor to be much more like another, than they can or need be ſuppos'd to be in Comedy: There the Laws of Action give them ſuch free, and almoſt unlimited Liberties, to play and wanton with Nature, that the Voice, Look, and Geſture of a Comedian may be as various, as the Manners and Faces of the whole Mankind are different from one another. Theſe are the Difficulties I lie under. Where I want Words, therefore, to deſcribe what I may commend, I can only hope you will give credit to my Opinion: And this Credit I ſhall moſt ſtand in need of, when I tell you, that

Nokes

Nokes was an Actor of a quite different Genius from any I have ever read, heard of, or ſeen, ſince or before his Time; and yet his general Excellence may be comprehended in one Article, *viz.* a plain and palpable Simplicity of Nature, which was ſo utterly his own, that he was often as unaccountably diverting in his common Speech, as on the Stage. I ſaw him once, giving an Account of ſome Table-talk, to another Actor behind the Scenes, which, a Man of Quality accidentally liſtening to, was ſo deceiv'd by his Manner, that he ask'd him, if that was a new Play, he was rehearſing? It ſeems almoſt amazing, that this Simplicity, ſo eaſy to *Nokes*, ſhould never be caught by any one of his Succeſſors. *Leigh* and *Underhill* have been well copied, though not equall'd by others. But not all the mimical Skill of *Eſtcourt* (fam'd as he was for it) though he had often ſeen *Nokes*, could ſcarce give us an Idea of him. After this, perhaps it will be ſaying leſs of him, when I own, that though I have ſtill the Sound of every Line he ſpoke, in my Ear, (which us'd not to be thought a bad one) yet I have often try'd, by myſelf, but in vain, to reach the leaſt diſtant Likeneſs of the *Vis Comica* of *Nokes*. Though this may ſeem little to his Praiſe, it may be negatively ſaying a good deal to it, becauſe I have never ſeen any one Actor, except himſelf, whom I could not, at leaſt, ſo far imitate, as to give you a more than tolerable Notion of his Manner. But *Nokes* was ſo ſingular a Species, and was ſo form'd by Nature, for the Stage, that I queſtion if (beyond the trouble of getting Words by Heart) it ever coſt him an Hour's Labour to arrive at that high Reputation he had, and deſerved.

The Characters he particularly ſhone in, were Sir *Martin Marr-al*, *Gomez* in the *Spaniſh Friar*, Sir *Nicholas Cully* in *Love in a Tub*, *Barnaby Brittle* in the *Wanton Wife*, Sir *Davy Dunce* in the *Soldier's Fortune*, *Soſia* in *Amphytrion*, &c. &c. &c. To tell you how he acted them, is beyond the reach of Criticiſm: But, to tell you what Effect his Action had upon the Spectator,

is not impoſſible: This then is all you will expect from me, and from hence I muſt leave you to gueſs at him.

He ſcarce ever made his firſt Entrance in a Play, but he was received with an involuntary Applauſe, not of Hands only, for thoſe may be, and have often been partially proſtituted, and beſpoken; but by a General Laughter, which the very Sight of him provok'd, and Nature cou'd not reſiſt; yet the louder the Laugh, the graver was his Look upon it; and ſure, the ridiculous Solemnity of his Features were enough to have ſet a whole Bench of Biſhops into a Titter, cou'd he have been honour'd (may it be no Offence to ſuppoſe it) with ſuch grave, and right reverend Auditors. In the ludicrous Diſtreſſes, which by the Laws of Comedy, Folly is often involv'd in; he ſunk into ſuch a mixture of piteous Puſillanimity, and a Conſternation ſo rufully ridiculous and inconſolable, that when he had ſhook you, to a Fatigue of Laughter, it became a moot point, whether you ought not to have pity'd him. When he debated any matter by himſelf, he would ſhut up his Mouth with a dumb ſtudious Powt, and roll his full Eye, into ſuch a vacant Amazement, ſuch a palpable Ignorance of what to think of it, that his ſilent Perplexity (which would ſometimes hold him ſeveral Minutes) gave your Imagination as full Content, as the moſt abſurd thing he could ſay upon it. In the Character of Sir *Martin Marr-all*, who is always committing Blunders to the Prejudice of his own Intereſt, when he had brought himſelf to a Dilemma in his Affairs, by vainly proceeding upon his own Head, and was, afterwards afraid to look his governing Servant, and Counſellor in the Face; what a copious, and diſtreſsful Harangue have I ſeen him make, with his Looks (while the Houſe has been in one continued Roar, for ſeveral Minutes) before he could prevail with his Courage to ſpeak a Word to him! Then might you have, at once, read in his Face *Vexation*---- that his own Meaſures, which he had piqued himſelf upon, had fail'd. *Envy*--- of his Servant's ſuperior Wit--- *Diſtreſs*--- to retrieve, the Occaſion he had loſt. *Shame*--- to confeſs

feſs his Folly; and yet a ſullen Deſire, to be reconcil'd, and better advis'd, for the future! What Tragedy ever ſhew'd us ſuch a Tumult of Paſſions, riſing, at once, in one Boſom! or what buskin'd Hero ſtanding under the Load of them, could have more effectually, mov'd his Spectators, by the moſt pathetick Speech, than poor miſerable *Nokes* did, by this ſilent Eloquence, and piteous Plight of his Features?

His Perſon was of the middle ſize, his Voice clear, and audible; his natural Countenance grave, and ſober; but the Moment he ſpoke, the ſettled Seriouſneſs of his Features was utterly diſcharg'd, and a dry, drolling, or laughing Levity took ſuch full Poſſeſſion of him, that I can only refer the Idea of him to your Imagination. In ſome of his low Characters, that became it, he had a ſhuffling Shamble in his Gait, with ſo contented an Ignorance in his Aſpect, and an aukward Abſurdity in his Geſture, that had you not known him, you could not have believ'd, that naturally he could have had a Grain of common Senſe. In a Word, I am tempted to ſum up the Character of *Nokes*, as a Comedian, in a Parodie of what *Shakeſpear*'s *Mark Antony* ſays of *Brutus*, as a Hero.

> *His Life was Laughter, and the* Ludicrous
> *So mixt, in him, that Nature might ſtand up,*
> *And ſay to all the World---- This was an* Actor.

Leigh was of the mercurial kind, and though not ſo ſtrict an Obſerver of Nature, yet never ſo wanton in his Performance, as to be wholly out of her Sight. In Humour, he lov'd to take a full Career, but was careful enough to ſtop ſhort, when juſt upon the Precipice: He had great Variety, in his manner, and was famous in very different Characters: In the canting, grave Hypocriſy of the *Spaniſh* Friar, he ſtretcht the Veil of Piety ſo thinly over him, that in every Look, Word, and Motion, you ſaw a palpable, wicked Slyneſs ſhine through it--- Here he kept his Vivacity demurely confin'd, till the pretended Duty of his

Function

Function demanded it; and then he exerted it, with a cholerick ſacerdotal Inſolence. But the Friar is a Character of ſuch glaring Vice, and ſo ſtrongly drawn, that a very indifferent Actor cannot but hit upon the broad Jeſts, that are remarkable, in every Scene of it. Though I have never yet ſeen any one, that has fill'd them with half the Truth, and Spirit of *Leigh*----- *Leigh* rais'd the Character as much above the Poet's Imagination, as the Character has ſometimes rais'd other Actors above themſelves! and I do not doubt, but the Poet's Knowledge of *Leigh*'s Genius help'd him to many a pleaſant Stroke of Nature, which without that Knowledge never might have enter'd into his Conception. *Leigh* was ſo eminent in this Character, that the late Earl of *Dorſet* (who was equally an Admirer, and a Judge of Theatrical Merit) had a whole Length of him, in the Friar's Habit, drawn by *Kneller:* The whole Portrait is highly painted, and extremely like him. But no wonder *Leigh* arriv'd to ſuch Fame, in what was ſo completely written for him; when Characters that would made the Reader yawn, in the Cloſet, have by the Strength of his Action, been lifted into the lowdeſt Laughter, on the Stage. Of this kind was the Scrivener's great boobily Son in the *Villain*; *Ralph*, a ſtupid, ſtaring, Under-ſervant, in Sir *Solomon Single*. Quite oppoſite to thoſe were Sir *Jolly Jumble*, in the *Soldier's Fortune*, and his old *Belfond* in the *Squire* of *Alſatia*. In Sir *Jolly* he was all Life, and laughing Humour; and when *Nokes* acted with him in the ſame Play, they return'd the Ball ſo dexterouſly upon one another, that every Scene between them, ſeem'd but one continued Reſt of Excellence--- But alas! when thoſe Actors were gone, that Comedy, and many others, for the ſame Reaſon, were rarely known to ſtand upon their own Legs; by ſeeing no more of *Leigh* or *Nokes* in them, the Characters were quite ſunk, and alter'd. In his Sir *William Belfond*, *Leigh* ſhew'd a more ſpirited Variety, than ever I ſaw, any Actor, in any one Character come up to: The Poet, 'tis true, had here, exactly chalk'd for him, the Out-lines of Nature;

ture; but the high Colouring, the ſtrong Lights and Shades of Humour, that enliven'd the whole, and ſtruck our Admiration, with Surprize and Delight, were wholly owing to the Actor. The eaſy Reader might, perhaps, have been pleas'd with the Author without diſcompoſing a Feature; but the Spectator muſt have heartily held his Sides, or the Actor would have heartily made them ach for it.

Now, though I obſerv'd before, that *Nokes* never was tolerably touch'd by any of his Succeſſors; yet, in this Character, I muſt own, I have ſeen *Leigh* extremely well imitated, by my late facetious Friend *Penkethman*, who though far ſhort of what was inimitable, in the Original, yet as to the general Reſemblance, was a very valuable Copy of him: And, as I know *Penkethman* cannot yet be out of your Memory, I have choſe to mention him here, to give you the neareſt Idea I can, of the Excellence of *Leigh* in that particular Light: For *Leigh* had many maſterly Variations, which the other cou'd not, nor ever pretended to reach; particularly in the Dotage, and Follies of extreme old Age, in the Characters of *Fumble* in the *Fond Husband*, and the Toothleſs Lawyer, in the *City Politicks*; both which Plays liv'd only by the extraordinary Performance of *Nokes* and *Leigh*.

There were two other Characters, of the farcical kind, *Geta* in the *Propheteſs*, and *Crack* in Sir *Courtly Nice*, which as they are leſs confin'd to Nature, the Imitation of them was leſs difficult to *Penkethman*; who, to ſay the Truth, delighted more in the whimſical, than the natural; therefore, when I ſay he ſometimes reſembled *Leigh*, I reſerve this Diſtinction, on his Maſter's ſide; that the pleaſant Extravagancies of *Leigh* were all the Flowers of his own Fancy, while the leſs fertile Brain of my Friend was contented to make uſe of the Stock his Predeceſſor had left him. What I have ſaid, therefore, is not to detract from honeſt *Pinky*'s Merit, but to do Juſtice to his Predeceſſor--- And though, 'tis true, we as ſeldom ſee a good Actor, as a great Poet ariſe from the bare *Imitation* of another's Genius; yet, if this

be a general Rule, *Penkethman* was the neareſt to an Exception from it; for with thoſe, who never knew *Leigh*, he might very well have paſs'd for a more than common Original. Yet again, as my Partiality for *Penkethman* ought not to lead me from Truth, I muſt beg leave (though out of its Place) to tell you fairly what was the beſt of him, that the Superiority of *Leigh* may ſtand in its due Light---- *Penkethman* had certainly, from Nature, a great deal of comic Power about him; but his Judgment was, by no means equal to it; for he would make frequent Deviations into the Whimſies of an *Harlequin.* By the way, (let me digreſs a little farther) whatever Allowances are made for the Licenſe of that Character, I mean of an *Harlequin*, whatever Pretences may be urg'd, from the Practice of the ancient Comedy, for it's being play'd in a Mask, reſembling no Part of the human Species; I am apt to think, the beſt Excuſe a modern Actor can plead for his continuing it, is that the low, ſenſeleſs, and monſtrous things he ſays, and does in it, no theatrical Aſſurance could get through, with a bare Face: Let me give you an Inſtance of even *Penkethman*'s being out of Countenance for want of it: When he firſt play'd *Harlequin* in the *Emperor* of the *Moon*, ſeveral Gentlemen (who inadvertently judg'd by the Rules of Nature) fancy'd that a great deal of the Drollery, and Spirit of his Grimace was loſt, by his wearing that uſeleſs, unmeaning Maſque of a black Cat, and therefore inſiſted, that the next time of his acting that Part, he ſhould play without it: Their Deſire was accordingly comply'd with--- but, alas! in vain---- *Penkethman* could not take to himſelf the Shame of the Character without being conceal'd--- he was no more *Harlequin*--- his Humour was quite diſconcerted! his Conſcience could not, with the ſame *Effronterie* declare againſt Nature, without the Cover of that unchanging Face, which he was ſure would never bluſh for it! no! it was quite another Caſe! without that Armour his Courage could not come up to the bold Strokes, that were neceſſary to get the better of common Senſe. Now

if

if this Circumſtance will juſtify the Modeſty of *Penkethman*, it cannot but throw a wholeſome Contempt on the low Merit of an *Harlequin*. But how farther neceſſary the Maſque is to that Fool's Coat, we have lately had a ſtronger Proof, in the Favour, that the *Harlequin Sauvage* met with, at *Paris*, and the ill Fate that follow'd the ſame *Sauvage*, when he pull'd off his Maſque in *London*. So that it ſeems, what was Wit from an *Harlequin*, was ſomething too extravagant from a human Creature. If therefore *Penkethman*, in Characters drawn from Nature, might ſometimes launch out into a few gameſome Liberties, which would not have been excus'd from a more correct Comedian; yet, in his manner of taking them, he always ſeem'd to me, in a kind of Conſciouſneſs of the Hazard he was running, as if he fairly confeſs'd, that what he did was only, as well as he *could* do--- That he was willing to take his Chance for Succeſs, but if he did not meet with it, a Rebuke ſhould break no Squares; he would mend it another time, and would take whatever pleas'd his Judges to think of him, in good part; and I have often thought, that a good deal of the Favour he met with, was owing to this ſeeming humble way of waving all Pretences to Merit, but what the Town would pleaſe to allow him. What confirms me in this Opinion is, that when it has been his ill Fortune to meet with a *Diſgraccia*, I have known him ſay apart to himſelf, yet loud enough to be heard--- *Odſo!* I believe I *am* a *little wrong here!* which once was ſo well receiv'd, by the Audience, that they turn'd their Reproof into Applauſe.

Now, the Judgment of *Leigh* always guarded the happier Sallies of his Fancy, from the leaſt Hazard of Diſapprobation: he ſeem'd not to court, but to attack your Applauſe, and always came off victorious; nor did his higheſt Aſſurance amount to any more, than that juſt Confidence, without which the commendable Spirit of every good Actor muſt be abated; and of this Spirit *Leigh* was a moſt perfect Maſter. He was much admir'd by King *Charles*, who us'd to diſtinguiſh him, when ſpoke

of, by the Title of *his Actor*: Which however makes me imagine, that in his Exile that Prince might have receiv'd his firſt Impreſſion of good Actors from the *French* Stage; for *Leigh* had more of that farcical Vivacity than *Nokes*; but *Nokes* was never languid by his more ſtrict Adherence to Nature, and as far as my Judgment is worth taking, if their intrinſick Merit could be juſtly weigh'd, *Nokes* muſt have had the better in the Balance. Upon the unfortunate Death of *Monfort*, *Leigh* fell ill of a Fever, and dy'd in a Week after him, in *December* 1692.

Underhill was a correct, and natural Comedian, his particular Excellence was in Characters, that may be called Still-life, I mean the ſtiff, the heavy, and the ſtupid; to theſe he gave the exacteſt, and moſt expreſſive Colours, and in ſome of them, look'd, as if it were not in the Power of human Paſſions to alter a Feature of him. In the ſolemn Formality of *Obadiah* in the *Committee*, and in the boobily heavineſs of *Lolpoop* in the *Squire* of *Alſatia*, he ſeem'd the immoveable Log he ſtood for! a Countenance of Wood could not be more fixt than his, when the Blockhead of a Character required it: His Face was full and long; from his Crown to the end of his Noſe, was the ſhorter half of it, ſo that the Diſproportion of his lower Features, when ſoberly compos'd, with an unwandering Eye hanging over them, threw him into the moſt lumpiſh, moping Mortal, that ever made Beholders merry! not but, at other times, he could be wakened into Spirit equally ridiculous---- In the courſe, ruſtick Humour of Juſtice *Clodpate*, in *Epſome Wells*, he was a delightful Brute! and in the blunt Vivacity of Sir *Sampſon*, in *Love* for *Love*, he ſhew'd all that true perverſe Spirit, that is commonly ſeen in much Wit, and ill Nature. This Character is one of thoſe few ſo well written, with ſo much Wit and Humour, that an Actor muſt be the groſſeſt Dunce, that does not appear with an unuſual Life in it: But it will ſtill ſhew as great a Proportion of Skill, to come near *Underhill* in the acting it, which (not to undervalue thoſe who ſoon came after him) I have not yet

yet ſeen. He was particularly admir'd too, for the Grave-digger in *Hamlet*. The Author of the *Tatler* recommends him to the Favour of the Town, upon that Play's being acted for his Benefit, wherein, after his Age had ſome Years oblig'd him to leave the Stage, he came on again, for that Day, to perform his old Part; but, alas! ſo worn, and diſabled, as if himſelf was to have lain in the Grave he was digging; when he could no more excite Laughter, his Infirmities were diſmiſs'd with Pity: He dy'd ſoon after, a ſuper-annuated Penſioner, in the Liſt of thoſe who, were ſupported by the joint Sharers, under the firſt Patent granted to Sir *Richard Steele*.

The deep Impreſſions of theſe excellent Actors, which I receiv'd in my Youth, I am afraid, may have drawn me into the common Foible of us old Fellows; which is, a Fondneſs, and perhaps, a tedious Partiality for the Pleaſures we have formerly taſted, and think are now fallen off, becauſe we can no longer enjoy them. If therefore I lie under that Suſpicion, tho' I have related nothing incredible, or out of the reach of a good Judge's Conception, I muſt appeal to thoſe Few, who are about my own Age, for the Truth and Likeneſs of theſe Theatrical Portraicts.

There were, at this time, ſeveral others in ſome degree of Favour with the Publick, *Powel*, *Verbruggen*, *Williams*, &c. But as I cannot think their beſt Improvements made them, in any wiſe, equal to thoſe I have ſpoke of, I ought not to range them in the ſame Claſs. Neither were *Wilks*, or *Dogget*, yet come to the Stage; nor was *Booth* initiated till about ſix Years after them; or Mrs. *Oldfield* known, 'till the Year 1700. I muſt therefore reſerve the four laſt for their proper Period, and proceed to the Actreſſes, that were famous with *Betterton*, at the latter end of the laſt Century.

Mrs. *Barry* was then in poſſeſſion of almoſt all the chief Parts in Tragedy: With what Skill ſhe gave Life to them, you will judge

judge from the Words of *Dryden*, in his Preface to *Cleomenes*, where he ſays,

Mrs. Barry, *always excellent, has in this Tragedy excell'd herſelf, and gain'd a Reputation, beyond any Woman I have ever ſeen on the Theatre.*

I very perfectly remember her acting that Part; and however unneceſſary it may ſeem, to give my Judgment after *Dryden*'s, I cannot help ſaying, I do not only cloſe with his Opinion, but will venture to add, that (tho' *Dryden* has been dead theſe Thirty Eight Years) the ſame Compliment, to this Hour, may be due to her Excellence. And tho' ſhe was then, not a little, paſt her Youth, ſhe was not, till that time, fully arriv'd to her Maturity of Power and Judgment: From whence I would obſerve, That the ſhort Life of Beauty, is not long enough to form a complete Actreſs. In Men, the Delicacy of Perſon is not ſo abſolutely neceſſary, nor the Decline of it ſo ſoon taken notice of. The Fame Mrs. *Barry* arriv'd to, is a particular Proof of the Difficulty there is, in judging with Certainty, from their firſt Trials, whether young People will ever make any great Figure on a Theatre. There was, it ſeems, ſo little Hope of Mrs. *Barry*, at her firſt ſetting out, that ſhe was, at the end of the firſt Year, diſcharg'd the Company, among others, that were thought to be a uſeleſs Expence to it. I take it for granted that the Objection to Mrs. *Barry*, at that time, muſt have been a defective Ear, or ſome unskilful Diſſonance, in her manner of pronouncing: But where there is a proper Voice, and Perſon, with the Addition of a good Underſtanding, Experience tells us, that ſuch Defect is not always invincible; of which, not only Mrs. *Barry*, but the late Mrs. *Oldfield*, are eminent Inſtances. Mrs. *Oldfield* had been a Year, in the Theatre-Royal, before ſhe was obſerv'd to give any tolerable Hope of her being an Actreſs; ſo unlike, to all manner of Propriety, was her Speaking! How unaccountably, then,

then, does a Genius for the Stage make its way towards Perfection? For, notwithſtanding theſe equal Diſadvantages, both theſe Actreſſes, tho' of different Excellence, made themſelves complete Miſtreſſes of their Art, by the Prevalence of their Underſtanding. If this Obſervation may be of any uſe, to the Maſters of future Theatres, I ſhall not then have made it to no purpoſe.

Mrs. *Barry*, in Characters of Greatneſs, had a Preſence of elevated Dignity, her Mien and Motion ſuperb, and gracefully majeſtick; her Voice full, clear, and ſtrong, ſo that no Violence of Paſſion could be too much for her: And when Diſtreſs, or Tenderneſs poſſeſs'd her, ſhe ſubſided into the moſt affecting Melody, and Softneſs. In the Art of exciting Pity, ſhe had a Power beyond all the Actreſſes I have yet ſeen, or what your Imagination can conceive. Of the former of theſe two great Excellencies, ſhe gave the moſt delightful Proofs in almoſt all the Heroic Plays of *Dryden* and *Lee*; and of the latter, in the ſofter Paſſions of *Otway*'s *Monimia* and *Belvidera*. In Scenes of Anger, Defiance, or Reſentment, while ſhe was impetuous, and terrible, ſhe pour'd out the Sentiment with an enchanting Harmony; and it was this particular Excellence, for which *Dryden* made her the above-recited Compliment, upon her acting *Caſſandra* in his *Cleomenes*. But here, I am apt to think his Partiality for that Character, may have tempted his Judgment to let it paſs for her Maſter-piece; when he could not but know, there were ſeveral other Characters in which her Action might have given her a fairer Pretence to the Praiſe he has beſtow'd on her, for *Caſſandra*; for, in no Part of that, is there the leaſt ground for Compaſſion, as in *Monimia*; nor equal cauſe for Admiration, as in the nobler Love of *Cleopatra*, or the tempeſtuous Jealouſy of *Roxana*. 'Twas in theſe Lights, I thought Mrs. *Barry* ſhone with a much brighter Excellence than in *Caſſandra*. She was the firſt Perſon whoſe Merit was diſtinguiſh'd, by the Indulgence of having an annual Benefit-Play, which was granted to her alone, if I miſtake not, firſt in King *James*'s time, and which became

not

not common to others, 'till the Diviſion of this Company, after the Death of King *William*'s Queen *Mary*. This great Actreſs dy'd of a Fever, towards the latter end of Queen *Anne*; the Year I have forgot; but perhaps you will recollect it, by an Expreſſion that fell from her in blank Verſe, in her laſt Hours, when ſhe was delirious, *viz.*

Ha, ha! and ſo they make us Lords, by Dozens!

Mrs. *Betterton*, tho' far advanc'd in Years, was ſo great a Miſtreſs of Nature, that even Mrs *Barry*, who acted the Lady *Macbeth* after her, could not in that Part, with all her ſuperior Strength, and Melody of Voice, throw out thoſe quick and careleſs Strokes of Terror, from the Diſorder of a guilty Mind, which the other gave us, with a Facility in her Manner, that render'd them at once tremendous, and delightful. Time could not impair her Skill, tho' he had brought her Perſon to decay. She was, to the laſt, the Admiration of all true Judges of Nature, and Lovers of *Shakeſpear*, in whoſe Plays ſhe chiefly excell'd, and without a Rival. When ſhe quitted the Stage, ſeveral good Actreſſes were the better for her Inſtruction. She was a Woman of an unblemiſh'd, and ſober Life; and had the Honour to teach Queen *Anne*, when Princeſs, the Part of *Semandra* in *Mithridates*, which ſhe acted at Court in King *Charles*'s time. After the Death of Mr. *Betterton*, her Husband, that Princeſs, when Queen, order'd her a Penſion for Life, but ſhe liv'd not to receive more than the firſt half Year of it.

Mrs. *Leigh*, the Wife of *Leigh* already mention'd, had a very droll way of dreſſing the pretty Foibles of ſuperannuated Beauties. She had, in her ſelf, a good deal of Humour, and knew how to infuſe it into the affected Mothers, Aunts, and modeſt ſtale Maids, that had miſs'd their Market; of this ſort were the Modiſh Mother in the *Chances*, affecting to be politely commode, for her own Daughter; the coquette Prude of an Aunt, in Sir *Courtly Nice*, who prides herſelf in being chaſte, and cruel, at Fifty;

and

And the languiſhing Lady *Wiſhfort*, in *The Way of the World*: In all theſe, with many others, ſhe was extremely entertaining, and painted, in a lively manner, the blind Side of Nature.

Mrs. *Butler*, who had her Chriſtian Name of *Charlotte* given her by King *Charles*, was the Daughter of a decay'd Knight, and had the Honour of that Prince's Recommendation to the Theatre; a provident Reſtitution, giving to the Stage in kind, what he had ſometimes taken from it: The Publick, at leaſt, was oblig'd by it; for ſhe prov'd not only a good Actreſs, but was allow'd, in thoſe Days, to ſing and dance to great Perfection. In the Dramatick Opera's of *Dioclesian*, and that of *King Arthur*, ſhe was a capital, and admired Performer. In ſpeaking too, ſhe had a ſweet-ton'd Voice, which, with her naturally genteel Air, and ſenſible Pronunciation, render'd her wholly Miſtreſs of the Amiable, in many ſerious Characters. In Parts of Humour too ſhe had a manner of blending her aſſuaſive Softneſs, even with the Gay, the Lively, and the Alluring. Of this ſhe gave an agreeable Inſtance, in her Action of the (*Villers*) Duke of *Buckingham*'s ſecond *Conſtantia* in the *Chances*. In which, if I ſhould ſay, I have never ſeen her exceeded, I might ſtill do no wrong to the late Mrs. *Oldfield*'s lively Performance of the ſame Character. Mr. *Oldfield*'s Fame may ſpare Mrs. *Butler*'s Action this Compliment, without the leaſt Diminution, or Diſpute of her Superiority, in Characters of more moment.

Here I cannot help obſerving, when there was but one Theatre in *London*, at what unequal Sallaries, compar'd to thoſe of later Days, the hired Actors were then held, by the abſolute Authority of their frugal Maſters, the Patentees; for Mrs. *Butler* had then but Forty Shillings a Week, and could ſhe have obtain'd an Addition of Ten Shillings more (which was refus'd her) would never have left their Service; but being offer'd her own Conditions, to go with Mr. *Aſhbury* to *Dublin* (who was then raiſing a Company of Actors for that Theatre, where there had been none ſince the Revolution) her Diſcontent, here, prevail'd with her to

accept of his Offer, and he found his Account in her Value. Were not thoſe Patentees moſt ſagacious Oeconomiſts, that could lay hold on ſo notable an Expedient, to leſſen their Charge? How gladly, in my Time of being a Sharer, would we have given four times her Income, to an Actreſs of equal Merit?

Mrs. *Monfort*, whoſe ſecond Marriage gave her the Name of *Verbruggen*, was Miſtreſs of more variety of Humour, than I ever knew in any one Woman Actreſs. This variety too, was attended with an equal Vivacity, which made her excellent in Characters extremely different. As ſhe was naturally a pleaſant Mimick, ſhe had the Skill to make that Talent uſeful on the Stage, a Talent which may be ſurpriſing in a Converſation, and yet be loſt when brought to the Theatre, which was the Caſe of *Eſtcourt* already mention'd: But where the Elocution is round, diſtinct, voluble, and various, as Mrs. *Monfort*'s was, the Mimick, there, is a great Aſſiſtant to the Actor. Nothing, tho' ever ſo barren, if within the Bounds of Nature, could be flat in her Hands. She gave many heightening Touches to Characters but coldly written, and often made an Author vain of his Work, that in it ſelf had but little merit. She was ſo fond of Humour, in what low Part ſoever to be found, that ſhe would make no ſcruple of defacing her fair Form, to come heartily into it; for when ſhe was eminent in ſeveral deſirable Characters of Wit, and Humour, in higher Life, ſhe would be, in as much Fancy, when deſcending into the antiquated *Abigail*, of *Fletcher*, as when triumphing in all the Airs, and vain Graces of a fine Lady; a Merit, that few Actreſſes care for. In a Play of *D'urfey*'s, now forgotten, call'd, *The Weſtern Laſs*, which Part ſhe acted, ſhe transform'd her whole Being, Body, Shape, Voice, Language, Look, and Features, into almoſt another Animal; with a ſtrong *Devonſhire* Dialect, a broad laughing Voice, a poking Head, round Shoulders, an unconceiving Eye, and the moſt be-diz'ning, dowdy Dreſs, that ever covered the untrain'd Limbs of a *Joan Trot*. To have ſeen her here, you would have thought it impoſſible the ſame

ſame Creature could ever have been recovered, to what was as eaſy to her, the Gay, the Lively, and the Deſirable. Nor was her Humour limited, to her Sex; for, while her Shape permitted, ſhe was a more adroit pretty Fellow, than is uſually ſeen upon the Stage: Her eaſy Air, Action, Mien, and Geſture, quite chang'd from the Quoif, to the cock'd Hat, and Cavalier in faſhion. People were ſo fond of ſeeing her a Man, that when the Part of *Bays* in the *Rehearſal*, had, for ſome time, lain dormant, ſhe was deſired to take it up, which I have ſeen her act with all the true, coxcombly Spirit, and Humour, that the Sufficiency of the Character required.

But what found moſt Employment for her whole various Excellence at once, was the Part of *Melantha*, in *Marriage-Alamode*. *Melantha* is as finiſh'd an Impertinent, as ever flutter'd in a Drawing-Room, and ſeems to contain the moſt compleat Syſtem of Female Foppery, that could poſſibly be crowded into the tortur'd Form of a Fine Lady. Her Language, Dreſs, Motion, Manners, Soul, and Body, are in a continual Hurry to be ſomething more, than is neceſſary, or commendable. And tho' I doubt it will be a vain Labour, to offer you a juſt Likeneſs of Mrs. *Monfort*'s Action, yet the fantaſtick Impreſſion is ſtill ſo ſtrong in my Memory, that I cannot help ſaying ſomething, tho' fantaſtically, about it. The firſt ridiculous Airs that break from her, are, upon a Gallant, never ſeen before, who delivers her a Letter from her Father, recommending him to her good Graces, as an honourable Lover. Here now, one would think ſhe might naturally ſhew a little of the Sexe's decent Reſerve, though never ſo ſlightly cover'd! No, Sir; not a Tittle of it; Modeſty is the Virtue of a poor-ſoul'd Country Gentlewoman; ſhe is too much a Court Lady, to be under ſo vulgar a Confuſion; ſhe reads the Letter, therefore, with a careleſs, dropping Lip, and an erected Brow, humming it haſtily over, as if ſhe were impatient to outgo her Father's Commands, by making a complete Conqueſt of him at once; and, that the Letter might not embarraſs her At-

tack, crack! ſhe crumbles it at once, into her Palm, and pours upon him her whole Artillery of Airs, Eyes, and Motion; down goes her dainty, diving Body, to the Ground, as if ſhe were ſinking under the conſcious Load of her own Attractions; then lanches into a Flood of Fine Language, and Compliment, ſtill playing her Cheſt forward in fifty Falls and Riſings, like a Swan upon waving Water; and, to complete her Impertinence, ſhe is ſo rapidly fond of her own Wit, that ſhe will not give her Lover leave to praiſe it: Silent aſſenting Bows, and vain Endeavours to ſpeak, are all the ſhare of the Converſation he is admitted to, which, at laſt, he is reliev'd from, by her Engagement to half a Score Viſits, which ſhe *ſwims* from him to make, with a Promiſe to return in a Twinkling.

If this Sketch has Colour enough to give you any near Conception of her, I then need only tell you, that throughout the whole Character, her variety of Humour was every way proportionable; as, indeed, in moſt Parts, that ſhe thought worth her care, or that had the leaſt Matter for her Fancy to work upon, I may juſtly ſay, That no Actreſs, from her own Conception, could have heighten'd them with more lively Strokes of Nature.

I come now to the laſt, and only living Perſon, of all thoſe whoſe Theatrical Characters I have promis'd you, Mrs. *Bracegirdle*; who, I know, would rather paſs her remaining Days forgotten, as an Actreſs, than to have her Youth recollected in the moſt favourable Light I am able to place it; yet, as ſhe is eſſentially neceſſary to my Theatrical Hiſtory, and, as I only bring her back to the Company of thoſe, with whom ſhe paſs'd the Spring and Summer of her Life, I hope it will excuſe the Liberty I take, in commemorating the Delight which the Publick receiv'd from her Appearance, while ſhe was an Ornament to the Theatre.

Mrs. *Bracegirdle* was now, but juſt blooming to her Maturity; her Reputation, as an Actreſs, gradually riſing with that of her Perſon;

Perſon; never any Woman was in ſuch general Favour of her Spectators, which, to the laſt Scene of her Dramatick Life, ſhe maintain'd, by not being unguarded in her private Character. This Diſcretion contributed, not a little, to make her the *Cara*, the Darling of the Theatre: For it will be no extravagant thing to ſay, Scarce an Audience ſaw her, that were leſs than half of them Lovers, without a ſuſpected Favourite among them: And tho' ſhe might be ſaid to have been the Univerſal Paſſion, and under the higheſt Temptations; her Conſtancy in reſiſting them, ſerv'd but to increaſe the number of her Admirers: And this perhaps you will more eaſily believe, when I extend not my Encomiums on her Perſon, beyond a Sincerity that can be ſuſpected; for ſhe had no greater Claim to Beauty, than what the moſt deſirable *Brunette* might pretend to. But her Youth, and lively Aſpect, threw out ſuch a Glow of Health, and Chearfulneſs, that, on the Stage, few Spectators that were not paſt it, could behold her without Deſire. It was even a Faſhion among the Gay, and Young, to have a Taſte or *Tendre* for Mrs. *Bracegirdle*. She inſpired the beſt Authors to write for her, and two of them, when they gave her a Lover, in a Play, ſeem'd palpably to plead their own Paſſions, and make their private Court to her, in fictitious Characters. In all the chief Parts ſhe acted, the Deſirable was ſo predominant, that no Judge could be cold enough to conſider, from what other particular Excellence ſhe became delightful. To ſpeak critically of an Actreſs, that was extremely good, were as hazardous, as to be poſitive in one's Opinion of the beſt Opera Singer. People often judge by Compariſon, where there is no Similitude, in the Performance. So that, in this caſe, we have only Taſte to appeal to, and of Taſte there can be no diſputing. I ſhall therefore only ſay of Mrs. *Bracegirdle*, That the moſt eminent Authors always choſe her for their favourite Character, and ſhall leave that unconteſtable Proof of her Merit to its own Value. Yet let me ſay, there were two very different Characters, in which ſhe acquitted herſelf with uncommon Applauſe:

plauſe: If any thing could excuſe that deſperate Extravagance of Love, that almoſt frantick Paſſion of *Lee*'s *Alexander the Great*, it muſt have been, when Mrs. *Bracegirdle* was his *Statira:* As when ſhe acted *Millamant*, all the Faults, Follies, and Affectation of that agreeable Tyrant, were venially melted down into ſo many Charms, and Attractions of a conſcious Beauty. In other Characters, where Singing was a neceſſary Part of them, her Voice and Action gave a Pleaſure, which good Senſe, in thoſe Days, was not aſham'd to give Praiſe to.

She retir'd from the Stage in the Height of her Favour from the Publick, when moſt of her Cotemporaries, whom ſhe had been bred up with, were declining, in the Year 1710, nor could ſhe be perſwaded to return to it, under new Maſters, upon the moſt advantageous Terms, that were offer'd her; excepting one Day, about a Year after, to aſſiſt her good Friend, Mr. *Betterton*, when ſhe play'd *Angelica*, in *Love for Love*, for his Benefit. She has ſtill the Happineſs to retain her uſual Chearfulneſs, and to be, without the tranſitory Charm of Youth, agreeable.

If, in my Account of theſe memorable Actors, I have not deviated from Truth, which, in the leaſt Article I am not conſcious of, may we not venture to ſay, They had not their Equals, at any one Time, upon any one Theatre in *Europe?* Or, if we confine the Compariſon, to that of *France* alone, I believe no other Stage can be much diſparag'd, by being left out of the queſtion; which cannot properly be decided, by the ſingle Merit of any one Actor; whether their *Baron*, or our *Betterton*, might be the Superior, (take which Side you pleaſe) that Point reaches, either way, but to a thirteenth part of what I contend for, *viz.* That no Stage, at any one Period, could ſhew thirteen Actors, ſtanding all in equal Lights of Excellence, in their Profeſſion: And I am the bolder, in this Challenge, to any other Nation, becauſe no Theatre having ſo extended a variety of natural Characters, as the *Engliſh*, can have a Demand for Actors of ſuch various Capacities; why then, where they could not be equally wanted,

wanted, ſhould we ſuppoſe them, at any one time, to have exiſted?

How imperfect ſoever this copious Account of them may be, I am not without Hope, at leaſt, it may in ſome degree ſhew, what Talents are requiſite to make Actors valuable: And if that may any ways inform, or aſſiſt the Judgment of future Spectators, it may, as often, be of ſervice to their publick Entertainments; for as their Hearers are, ſo will Actors be; worſe, or better, as the falſe, or true Taſte applauds, or diſcommends them. Hence only can our Theatres improve, or muſt degenerate.

There is another Point, relating to the hard Condition of thoſe who write for the Stage, which I would recommend to the Conſideration of their Hearers; which is, that the extreme Severity with which they damn a bad Play, ſeems too terrible a Warning to thoſe whoſe untried Genius might hereafter give them a good one: Whereas it might be a Temptation, to a latent Author, to make the Experiment, could he be ſure that, though not approved, his Muſe might, at leaſt, be diſmiſs'd with Decency: But the Vivacity of our modern Criticks is of late grown ſo riotous, that an unſucceſsful Author has no more Mercy ſhewn him, than a notorious Cheat, in a Pillory; every Fool, the loweſt Member of the Mob, becomes a Wit, and will have a fling at him. They come now to a new Play, like Hounds to a Carcaſs, and are all in a full Cry, ſometimes for an Hour together, before the Curtain riſes to throw it amongſt them. Sure, thoſe Gentlemen cannot but allow, that a Play condemn'd after a fair Hearing, falls with thrice the Ignominy, as when it is refus'd that common Juſtice.

But when their critical Interruptions grow ſo loud, and of ſo long a continuance, that the Attention of quiet People (though not ſo complete Criticks) is terrify'd, and the Skill of the Actors quite diſconcerted by the Tumult, the Play then ſeems rather to fall by Aſſaſſins, than by a lawful Sentence. Is it poſſible that

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ſuch Auditors can receive Delight, or think it any Praiſe to them, to proſecute ſo injurious, ſo unmanly a Treatment? And tho' perhaps the Compaſſionate, on the other ſide (who know they have as good a Right to clap, and ſupport, as others have to catcall, damn, and deſtroy,) may oppoſe this Oppreſſion; their Good-nature, alas! contributes little to the Redreſs; for in this ſort of Civil War, the unhappy Author, like a good Prince, while his Subjects are at mortal Variance, is ſure to be a Loſer by a Victory on either Side; for ſtill the Commonwealth, his Play, is, during the Conflict, torn to pieces. While this is the Caſe, while the Theatre is ſo turbulent a Sea, and ſo infeſted with Pirates, what Poetical Merchant, of any Subſtance, will venture to trade in it? If theſe valiant Gentlemen pretend to be Lovers of Plays, why will they deter Gentlemen, from giving them ſuch, as are fit for Gentlemen to ſee? In a word, this new Race of Criticks ſeem to me, like the Lion-Whelps in the *Tower*, who are ſo boiſterouſly gameſome at their Meals, that they daſh down the Bowls of Milk, brought for their own Breakfaſt.

As a good Play is certainly the moſt rational, and the higheſt Entertainment, that human Invention can produce, let that be my Apology (if I need any) for having thus freely delivered my Mind, in behalf of thoſe Gentlemen, who, under ſuch calamitous Hazards, may hereafter be reduc'd to write for the Stage; whoſe Caſe I ſhall compaſſionate, from the ſame Motive, that prevail'd on *Dido*, to aſſiſt the *Trojans* in Diſtreſs.

Non ignara mali miſeris ſuccurrere diſco. Virg.

Or, as *Dryden* has it,

I learn to pity Woes ſo like my own.

If thoſe particular Gentlemen have ſometimes made me the humbled Object of their Wit, and Humour, their Triumph at leaſt has done me this involuntary Service, that it has driven me a Year

a Year or two ſooner into a quiet Life, than otherwiſe, my own want of Judgment might have led me to: I left the Stage, before my Strength left me; and tho' I came to it again, for ſome few Days, a Year or two after; my Reception there not only turn'd to my Account, but ſeem'd a fair Invitation, that I would make my Viſits more frequent: But, to give over a Winner, can be no very imprudent Reſolution.

CHAP. VI.

The Author's firſt Step upon the Stage. His Diſcouragements. The beſt Actors in Europe, *ill us'd. A Revolution, in their Favour. King* William *grants them a Licence to act in* Lincoln's-Inn Fields. *The Author's Diſtreſs, in being thought a worſe Actor, than a Poet. Reduc'd to write a Part for himſelf. His Succeſs. More Remarks, upon Theatrical Action. Some, upon himſelf.*

HAVING given you the State of the Theatre, at my firſt Admiſſion to it; I am now drawing towards the ſeveral Revolutions it ſuffer'd, in my own Time. But (as you find by the ſetting out of my Hiſtory) that I always intended myſelf the Heroe of it, it may be neceſſary to let you know me, in my Obſcurity, as well as in my higher Light, when I became one of the Theatrical Triumvirat.

The Patentees, who were now Maſters of this united, and only Company of Comedians, ſeem'd to make it a Rule, that no young Perſons, deſirous to be Actors, ſhould be admitted into Pay under, at leaſt, half a Year's Probation; wiſely knowing, that how early ſoever they might be approv'd of, there could be no great fear of loſing them, while they had, then, no other Market to go to. But, alas! Pay was the leaſt of my Concern;

the Joy, and Privilege of every Day ſeeing Plays, for nothing, I thought was a ſufficient Conſideration, for the beſt of my Services. So that it was no Pain to my Patience, that I waited full three Quarters of a Year, before I was taken into a Salary of Ten Shillings *per* Week; which, with the Aſſiſtance of Food, and Raiment, at my Father's Houſe, I then thought a moſt plentiful Acceſſion, and myſelf the happieſt of Mortals.

The firſt Thing that enters into the Head of a young Actor, is that of being a Heroe: In this Ambition I was ſoon ſnubb'd, by the Inſufficiency of my Voice; to which might be added, an uninform'd meagre Perſon (tho' then not ill made) with a diſmal pale Complexion. Under theſe Diſadvantages, I had but a melancholy Proſpect of ever playing a Lover, with Mrs. *Bracegirdle*, which I had flatter'd my Hopes, that my Youth might one Day, have recommended me to. What was moſt promiſing in me, then, was the Aptneſs of my Ear; for I was ſoon allow'd to ſpeak juſtly, tho' what was grave and ſerious, did not equally become me. The firſt Part, therefore, in which I appear'd, with any glimpſe of Succeſs, was the Chaplain in the *Orphan* of *Otway*. There is in this Character (of one Scene only) a decent Pleaſantry, and Senſe enough to ſhew an Audience, whether the Actor has any himſelf. Here was the firſt Applauſe I ever receiv'd, which, you may be ſure, made my Heart leap with a higher Joy, than may be neceſſary to deſcribe; and yet my Tranſport was not then half ſo high, as at what *Goodman* (who had now left the Stage) ſaid of me, the next Day, in my hearing. *Goodman* often came to a Rehearſal for Amuſement, and having ſate out the *Orphan*, the Day before; in a Converſation with ſome of the principal Actors, enquir'd what new young Fellow that was, whom he had ſeen in the Chaplain? Upon which, *Monfort* reply'd, *That's he, behind you.* *Goodman* then turning about, look'd earneſtly at me, and, after ſome Pauſe, clapping me on the Shoulder, rejoin'd, *If he does not make a good Actor, I'll be d---'d!* The Surprize of being commended

mended, by one who had been himſelf ſo eminent, on the Stage, and in ſo poſitive a manner, was more than I could ſupport; in a Word, it almoſt took away my Breath, and (laugh, if you pleaſe) fairly drew Tears from my Eyes! And, tho' it may be as ridiculous, as incredible, to tell you what a full Vanity, and Content, at that time poſſeſs'd me, I will ſtill make it a Queſtion, whether *Alexander* himſelf, or *Charles the Twelfth* of *Sweden*, when at the Head of their firſt victorious Armies, could feel a greater Tranſport, in their Boſoms, than I did then in mine, when but in the Rear of this Troop of Comedians. You ſee, to what low Particulars I am forc'd to deſcend, to give you a true Reſemblance of the early and lively Follies of my Mind. Let me give you another Inſtance, of my Diſcretion, more deſperate, than that, of preferring the Stage, to any other Views of Life. One might think, that the Madneſs of breaking, from the Advice, and Care of Parents, to turn Player, could not eaſily be exceeded: But what think you, Sir, of---- Matrimony? which, before I was Two-and-twenty, I actually committed, when I had but Twenty Pounds a Year, which my Father had aſſur'd to me, and Twenty Shillings a Week from my Theatrical Labours, to maintain, as I then thought, the happieſt young Couple, that ever took a Leap in the Dark! If after this, to complete my Fortune, I turn'd Poet too, this laſt Folly, indeed, had ſomething a better Excuſe --- Neceſſity: Had it never been my Lot to have come to the Stage, 'tis probable, I might never have been inclin'd, or reduc'd to have wrote for it: But having once expos'd my Perſon there, I thought it could be no additional Diſhonour to let my Parts, whatever they were, take their Fortune along with it. ------ But, to return to the Progreſs I made as an Actor.

Queen *Mary* having commanded the *Double Dealer* to be acted, *Kynaſton* happen'd to be ſo ill, that he could not hope to be able next Day to perform his Part of the Lord *Touchwood*. In this Exigence, the Author, Mr. *Congreve*, adviſ'd that it might be

given to me, if at ſo ſhort a Warning I would undertake it. The Flattery of being thus diſtinguiſh'd by ſo celebrated an Author, and the Honour to act before a Queen, you may be ſure, made me blind to whatever Difficulties might attend it. I accepted the Part, and was ready in it before I ſlept; next Day the Queen was preſent at the Play, and was receiv'd with a new Prologue from the Author, ſpoken by Mrs. *Barry*, humbly acknowledging the great Honour done to the Stage, and to his Play in particular: Two Lines of it, which though I have not ſince read, I ſtill remember.

But never were in Rome, *nor* Athens *ſeen,*
So fair a Circle, or ſo bright a Queen.

After the Play, Mr. *Congreve* made me the Compliment of ſaying, that I had not only anſwer'd, but had exceeded his Expectations, and that he would ſhew me he was ſincere, by his ſaying more of me to the Maſters---- He was as good as his Word, and the next Pay-day, I found my Sallary, of fifteen, was then advanc'd to twenty Shillings a Week. But alas! this favourable Opinion of Mr. *Congreve*, made no farther Impreſſion upon the Judgment of my good Maſters; it only ſerv'd to heighten my own Vanity; but could not recommend me to any new Trials of my Capacity; not a Step farther could I get, 'till the Company was again divided; when the Deſertion of the beſt Actors left a clear Stage, for younger Champions to mount, and ſhew their beſt Pretenſions to favour. But it is now time to enter upon thoſe Facts, that immediately preceded this remarkable Revolution of the Theatre.

You have ſeen how compleat a Set of Actors were under the Government of the united Patents in 1690; if their Gains were not extraordinary, what ſhall we impute it to, but ſome extraordinary ill Management? I was then too young to be in their Secrets, and therefore can only obſerve upon what I ſaw, and have ſince thought viſibly wrong.

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Though the Succeſs of the *Propheteſs*, and King *Arthur* (two dramatic Opera's, in which the Patentees had embark'd all their Hopes) was, in Appearance, very great, yet their whole Receipts did not ſo far ballance their Expence, as to keep them out of a large Debt, which it was publickly known was, about this time, contracted, and which found work for the Court of Chancery for about twenty Years following, till one ſide of the Cauſe grew weary. But this was not all that was wrong; every Branch of the Theatrical Trade had been ſacrific'd, to the neceſſary fitting out thoſe tall Ships of Burthen, that were to bring home the *Indies*. Plays of courſe were neglected, Actors held cheap, and ſlightly dreſs'd, while Singers, and Dancers were better paid, and embroider'd. Theſe Meaſures, of courſe, created Murmurings, on one ſide, and ill Humour and Contempt on the other. When it became neceſſary therefore to leſſen the Charge, a Reſolution was taken to begin with the Sallaries of the Actors; and what ſeem'd to make this Reſolution more neceſſary at this time, was the Loſs of *Nokes*, *Monfort*, and *Leigh*, who all dy'd about the ſame Year: No wonder then, if when theſe great Pillars were at once remov'd, the Building grew weaker, and the Audiences very much abated. Now in this Diſtreſs, what more natural Remedy could be found, than to incite and encourage (tho' with ſome Hazard) the Induſtry of the ſurviving Actors? But the Patentees, it ſeems, thought the ſurer way was to bring down their Pay, in proportion to the Fall of their Audiences. To make this Project more feaſible, they propos'd to begin at the Head of 'em, rightly judging, that if the Principals acquieſc'd, their Inferiors would murmur in vain. To bring this about with a better Grace, they under Pretence of bringing younger Actors forward, order'd ſeveral of *Betterton*'s, and Mrs. *Barry*'s chief Parts to be given to young *Powel*, and Mrs. *Bracegirdle*. In this they committed two palpable Errors; for while the beſt Actors are in Health, and ſtill on the Stage, the Publick is always apt to be out of Humour, when thoſe of a lower Claſs pretend to ſtand in their Places;

Places; or admitting, at this time, they might have been accepted, this Project might very probably have leſſen'd, but could not poſſibly mend an Audience; and was a ſure Loſs of that Time, in ſtudying, which might have been better employ'd in giving the Auditor Variety, the only Temptation to a pall'd Appetite; and Variety is only to be given by Induſtry: But Induſtry will always be lame, when the Actor has Reaſon to be diſcontented. This the Patentees did not conſider, or pretended not to value, while they thought their Power ſecure, and uncontroulable: But farther, their firſt Project did not ſucceed; for tho' the giddy Head of *Powel*, accepted the Parts of *Betterton*; Mrs. *Bracegirdle* had a different way of thinking, and deſir'd to be excus'd, from thoſe of Mrs. *Barry*; her good Senſe was not to be miſled by the inſidious Favour of the Patentees; ſhe knew the Stage was wide enough for her Succeſs, without entring into any ſuch raſh, and invidious Competition, with Mrs. *Barry*, and therefore wholly refus'd acting any Part that properly belong'd to her. But this Proceeding, however, was Warning enough to make *Betterton* be upon his Guard, and to alarm others, with Apprehenſions of their own Safety, from the Deſign that was laid againſt him: *Betterton*, upon this, drew into his Party moſt of the valuable Actors, who to ſecure their Unity, enter'd with him into a ſort of Aſſociation, to ſtand, or fall together. All this the Patentees for ſome time ſlighted, but when Matters drew towards a Criſis, they found it adviſeable to take the ſame Meaſures, and accordingly open'd an Aſſociation on their part; both which were ſeverally ſign'd, as the Intereſt or Inclination of either Side led them.

During theſe Contentions, which the impolitick Patentees had rais'd againſt themſelves (not only by this I have mentioned, but by many other Grievances, which my Memory retains not) the Actors offer'd a Treaty of Peace; but their Maſters imagining no Conſequence could ſhake the Right of their Authority, refus'd all Terms of Accommodation. In the mean time this Diſ-

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ſention was ſo prejudicial to their daily Affairs, that I remember it was allow'd by both Parties, that before *Chriſtmas*, the Patent had loſt the getting of at leaſt a thouſand Pounds by it.

My having been a Witneſs of this unneceſſary Rupture, was of great uſe to me, when many Years after, I came to be a Manager my ſelf. I laid it down as a ſettled Maxim, that no Company could flouriſh while the chief Actors, and the Undertakers were at variance. I therefore made it a Point, while it was poſſible, upon tolerable Terms, to keep the valuable Actors in humour with their Station; and tho' I was as jealous of their Encroachments, as any of my Co-partners could be, I always guarded againſt the leaſt Warmth, in my Expoſtulations with them; not but at the ſame time they might ſee, I was perhaps more determin'd in the Queſtion, than thoſe that gave a looſe to their Reſentment, and when they were cool, were as apt to recede. I do not remember that I ever made a promiſe to any, that I did not keep, and therefore was cautious how I made them. This Coldneſs, though it might not pleaſe, at leaſt left them nothing to reproach me with; and if Temper, and fair Words could prevent a Diſobligation, I was ſure never to give Offence or receive it. But as I was but one of three, I could not oblige others to obſerve the ſame Conduct. However, by this means, I kept many an unreaſonable Diſcontent, from breaking out, and both Sides found their Account in it.

How a contemptuous and overbearing manner of treating Actors had like to have ruin'd us, in our early Proſperity, ſhall be ſhewn in its Place: If future Managers ſhould chance to think my way right, I ſuppoſe they will follow it; if not, when they find what happen'd to the Patentees (who choſe to diſagree with their People) perhaps they may think better of it.

The Patentees then, who by their united Powers, had made a Monopoly of the Stage, and conſequently preſum'd they might impoſe what Conditions they pleas'd upon their People, did not conſider, that they were all this while endeavouring to enſlave

a Set

a Set of Actors, whom the Publick (more arbitrary than themſelves) were inclin'd to ſupport; nor did they reflect, that the Spectator naturally wiſh'd, that the Actor, who gave him Delight, might enjoy the Profits ariſing from his Labour, without regard of what pretended Damage, or Injuſtice might fall upon his Owners, whoſe perſonal Merit the Publick was not ſo well acquainted with. From this Conſideration, then, ſeveral Perſons of the higheſt Diſtinction eſpous'd their Cauſe, and ſometimes, in the Circle, entertain'd the King with the State of the Theatre. At length their Grievances were laid before the Earl of *Dorſet*, then Lord Chamberlain, who took the moſt effectual Method for their Relief. The Learned of the Law were adviſ'd with, and they gave their Opinion, that no Patent for acting Plays, *&c.* could tie up the Hands of a ſucceeding Prince, from granting the like Authority, where it might be thought proper to truſt it. But while this Affair was in Agitation, Queen *Mary* dy'd, which of courſe occaſion'd a Ceſſation of all publick Diverſions. In this melancholy Interim, *Betterton*, and his Adherents had more Leiſure to ſollicit their Redreſs; and the Patentees now finding, that the Party againſt them was gathering Strength, were reduc'd to make ſure of as good a Company, as the Leavings of *Betterton*'s Intereſt could form; and theſe, you may be ſure, would not loſe this Occaſion of ſetting a Price upon their Merit, equal to their own Opinion of it, which was but juſt double to what they had before. *Powel*, and *Verbruggen*, who had then but forty Shillings a Week, were now rais'd each of them to four Pounds, and others in proportion: As for my ſelf, I was then too inſignificant to be taken into their Councils, and conſequently ſtood among thoſe of little Importance, like Cattle in a Market, to be ſold to the firſt Bidder. But the Patentees ſeeming in the greater Diſtreſs for Actors, condeſcended to purchaſe me. Thus, without any farther Merit, than that of being a ſcarce Commodity, I was advanc'd to thirty Shillings a Week: Yet our Company was ſo far from being full, that our Commanders

manders were forc'd to beat up for Voluntiers, in ſeveral diſtant Counties; it was this Occaſion that firſt brought *Johnſon* and *Bullock* to the Service of the Theatre-Royal.

Forces being thus rais'd, and the War declared on both Sides, *Betterton*, and his Chiefs had the Honour of an Audience of the *King*, who conſider'd them as the only Subjects, whom he had not yet deliver'd from arbitrary Power; and graciouſly diſmiſs'd them, with an Aſſurance of Relief, and Support--- Accordingly a ſelect number of them were impower'd by his Royal Licence, to act in a ſeparate Theatre, for themſelves. This great Point being obtain'd, many People of Quality came into a voluntary Subſcription of twenty, and ſome of forty Guineas a-piece, for the erecting a Theatre within the Walls of the Tennis-Court, in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*. But as it requir'd Time to fit it up, it gave the Patentees more Leiſure to muſter their Forces, who notwithſtanding were not able to take the Field till the *Eaſter-Monday* in *April* following. Their firſt Attempt was a reviv'd Play, call'd *Abdelazar*, or the *Moor's Revenge*, poorly written, by Mrs. *Behn*. The Houſe was very full, but whether it was the Play, or the Actors, that were not approv'd, the next Day's Audience ſunk to nothing. However, we were aſſur'd, that let the Audiences be never ſo low, our Maſters would make good all Deficiences, and ſo indeed they did, 'till towards the End of the Seaſon, when Dues to Ballance came too thick upon 'em. But that I may go gradually on with my own Fortune, I muſt take this Occaſion to let you know, by the following Circumſtance, how very low my Capacity, as an Actor, was then rated: It was thought neceſſary, at our Opening, that the Town ſhou'd be addreſs'd in a new Prologue; but to our great Diſtreſs, among ſeveral, that were offer'd, not one was judg'd fit to be ſpoken. This I thought a favourable Occaſion, to do my ſelf ſome remarkable Service, if I ſhould have the good Fortune, to produce one that might be accepted. The next (memorable) Day my Muſe brought forth her firſt Fruit that was ever made publick;

how good, or bad imports not; my Prologue was accepted, and reſolv'd on to be ſpoken. This Point being gain'd, I began to ſtand upon Terms, you will ſay, not unreaſonable; which were, that if I might ſpeak it my ſelf, I would expect no farther Reward for my Labour: This was judg'd as bad as having no Prologue at all! You may imagine how hard I thought it, that they durſt not truſt my poor poetical Brat, to my own Care. But ſince I found it was to be given into other Hands, I inſiſted that two Guineas ſhould be the Price of my parting with it; which with a Sigh I receiv'd, and *Powel* ſpoke the Prologue: But every Line, that was applauded, went ſorely to my Heart, when I reflected, that the ſame Praiſe might have been given to my own ſpeaking it; nor could the Succeſs of the Author compenſate the Diſtreſs of the Actor. However, in the End, it ſerv'd, in ſome ſort, to mend our People's Opinion of me; and whatever the Criticks might think of it, one of the Patentees (who, it is true, knew no difference between *Dryden* and *D'urfey*) ſaid, upon the Succeſs of it, that inſooth! I was an ingenious young Man. This ſober Compliment (though I could have no Reaſon to be vain upon it) I thought was a fair Promiſe to my being in favour. But to Matters of more Moment: Now let us reconnoitre the Enemy.

After we had ſtolen ſome few Days March upon them, the Forces of *Betterton* came up with us in terrible Order: In about three Weeks following, the new Theatre was open'd againſt us, with a veteran Company, and a new Train of Artillery; or in plainer *Engliſh*, the old Actors, in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields* began, with a new Comedy of Mr. *Congreve*'s, call'd *Love* for *Love*; which ran on with ſuch extraordinary Succeſs, that they had ſeldom occaſion to act any other Play, 'till the End of the Seaſon. This valuable Play had a narrow Eſcape, from falling into the Hands of the Patentees; for before the Diviſion of the Company, it had been read, and accepted of at the Theatre-Royal: But while the Articles of Agreement for it were preparing,

ing, the Rupture, in the Theatrical State, was ſo far advanc'd, that the Author took Time to pauſe, before he ſign'd them; when finding that all Hopes of Accommodation were impracticable, he thought it adviſeable, to let it take its Fortune, with thoſe Actors for whom he had firſt intended the Parts.

Mr. *Congreve* was then in ſuch high Reputation, as an Author, that beſides his Profits, from this Play, they offer'd him a whole Share with them, which he accepted; in Conſideration of which he oblig'd himſelf, if his Health permitted, to give them one new Play every Year. *Dryden*, in King *Charles*'s Time, had the ſame Share, with the King's Company; but he bound himſelf to give them two Plays every Seaſon. This you may imagine he could not hold long, and I am apt to think, he might have ſerv'd them better, with one in a Year, not ſo haſtily written. Mr. *Congreve*, whatever Impediment he met with, was three Years before, in purſuance to his Agreement, he produc'd the *Mourning Bride*; and if I miſtake not, the Interval had been much the ſame, when he gave them the *Way of the World*. But it came out the ſtronger, for the Time it coſt him, and to their better Support, when they ſorely wanted it: For though they went on with Succeſs for a Year or two, and even, when their Affairs were declining, ſtood in much higher Eſtimation of the Publick, than their Opponents; yet, in the End, both Sides were great Sufferers by their Separation; the natural Conſequence of two Houſes, which I have already mention'd in a former Chapter.

The firſt Error this new Colony of Actors fell into, was their inconſiderately parting with *Williams*, and Mrs. *Monfort*, upon a too nice (not to ſay ſevere) Punctilio; in not allowing them to be equal Sharers with the reſt; which before they had acted one Play, occaſion'd their Return to the Service of the Patentees. As I have call'd this an Error, I ought to give my Reaſons for it. Though the Induſtry of *Williams* was not equal to his Capacity; for he lov'd his Bottle better than his Buſineſs; and though Mrs. *Monfort* was only excellent in Comedy, yet their Merit

was too great, almoſt on any Scruples, to be added to the Enemy; and, at worſt, they were certainly much more above thoſe they would have rank'd them with, than they could poſſibly be under thoſe, they were not admitted to be equal to. Of this Fact there is a poetical Record, in the Prologue to *Love for Love*, where the Author ſpeaking of the, then, happy State of the Stage, obſerves, that if, in Paradiſe, when two only were there, they both fell; the Surprize was leſs, if from ſo numerous a Body as theirs, there had been any Deſerters.

Abate the Wonder, and the Fault forgive,
If, in our larger Family, we grieve
One falling Adam, *and one tempted* Eve.

Theſe Lines alluded to the Revolt of the Perſons above mention'd.

Notwithſtanding the Acquiſition of theſe two Actors, who were of more Importance, than any of thoſe, to whoſe Aſſiſtance they came, the Affairs of the Patentees were ſtill, in a very creeping Condition; they were now, too late, convinc'd of their Error, in having provok'd their People to this Civil War, of the Theatre! quite chang'd, and diſmal, now, was the Proſpect before them! their Houſes thin, and the Town crowding into a new one! Actors at double Sallaries, and not half the uſual Audiences, to pay them! and all this brought upon them, by thoſe, whom their full Security had contemn'd, and who were now in a fair way of making their Fortunes, upon the ruin'd Intereſt of their Oppreſſors.

Here, tho' at this time, my Fortune depended on the Succeſs of the Patentees, I cannot help, in regard to Truth, remembering the rude, and riotous Havock we made of all the late dramatic Honours of the Theatre! all became at once the Spoil of Ignorance, and Self-conceit! *Shakeſpear* was defac'd, and tortur'd in every ſignal Character---- *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, loſt in one Hour all their good Senſe, their Dignity, and Fame. *Brutus* and

and *Caſſius* became noiſy Bluſterers, with bold unmeaning Eyes, miſtaken Sentiments, and turgid Elocution! Nothing, ſure, could more painfully regret a judicious Spectator, than to ſee, at our firſt ſetting out, with what rude Confidence, thoſe Habits, which Actors of real Merit had left behind them, were worn by giddy Pretenders that ſo vulgarly diſgrac'd them! Not young Lawyers in hir'd Robes, and Plumes, at a Maſquerade, could be leſs, what they would ſeem, or more aukwardly perſonate the Characters they belong'd to. If, in all theſe Acts of wanton Waſte, theſe Inſults, upon injur'd Nature, you obſerve, I have not yet charg'd one of them upon my ſelf; it is not from an imaginary Vanity, that I could have avoided them; but that I was rather ſafe, by being too low, at that time, to be admitted even to my Chance of falling into the ſame eminent Errors: So that as none of thoſe great Parts ever fell to my Share, I could not be accountable for the Execution of them: Nor indeed could I get one good Part of any kind, 'till many Months after; unleſs it were of that ſort, which no body elſe car'd for, or would venture to expoſe themſelves in. The firſt unintended Favour, therefore, of a Part of any Value, Neceſſity threw upon me, on the following Occaſion.

As it has been always judg'd their natural Intereſt, where there are two Theatres, to do one another as much Miſchief as they can; you may imagine it could not be long, before this hoſtile Policy ſhew'd itſelf, in Action. It happen'd, upon our having Information on a *Saturday* Morning, that the *Tueſday* after, *Hamlet* was intended to be acted at the other Houſe, where it had not yet been ſeen; our merry menaging Actors (for they were now in a manner left to govern themſelves) reſolv'd, at any rate, to ſteal a March upon the Enemy, and take Poſſeſſion of the ſame Play the Day before them: Accordingly, *Hamlet* was given out that Night, to be acted with us on *Monday*. The Notice of this ſudden Enterprize, ſoon reach'd the other Houſe, who, in my Opinion, too much regarded it; for they ſhorten'd their firſt

Orders,

Orders, and reſolv'd that *Hamlet* ſhould to *Hamlet* be oppos'd, on the ſame Day; whereas, had they given notice in their Bills, that the ſame Play would have been acted by them the Day after, the Town would have been in no doubt, which Houſe they ſhould have reſerv'd themſelves for; ours muſt certainly have been empty, and theirs, with more Honour, have been crowded: Experience, many Years after, in like Caſes, has convinc'd me, that this would have been the more laudable Conduct. But be that as it may; when, in their *Monday*'s Bills, it was ſeen that *Hamlet* was up againſt us, our Conſternation was terrible, to find that ſo hopeful a Project was fruſtrated. In this Diſtreſs, *Powell*, who was our commanding Officer, and whoſe enterpriſing Head wanted nothing but Skill to carry him thro' the moſt deſperate Attempts; for, like others of his Caſt, he had murder'd many a Hero, only to get into his Cloaths. This *Powell*, I ſay, immediately call'd a Council of War; where the Queſtion was, Whether he ſhould fairly face the Enemy, or make a Retreat, to ſome other Play of more probable Safety? It was ſoon reſolv'd that to act *Hamlet* againſt *Hamlet*, would be certainly throwing away the Play, and diſgracing themſelves to little or no Audience; to conclude, *Powell*, who was vain enough to envy *Betterton*, as his Rival, propos'd to change Plays with them, and that, as they had given out the *Old Batchelor*, and had chang'd it for *Hamlet*, againſt us; we ſhould give up our *Hamlet*, and turn the *Old Batchelor* upon them. This Motion was agreed to, *Nemine contradicente*; but upon Enquiry, it was found, that there were not two Perſons among them, who had ever acted in that Play: But that Objection, it ſeems, (though all the Parts were to be ſtudy'd in ſix Hours) was ſoon got over; *Powell* had an Equivalent, *in petto*, that would balance any Deficiency on that Score; which was, that he would play the *Old Batchelor* himſelf, and mimick *Betterton*, throughout the whole Part. This happy Thought was approv'd with Delight, and Applauſe, as whatever can be ſuppos'd to ridicule Merit, gene-

rally

rally gives Joy to thoſe that want it: Accordingly, the Bills were chang'd, and at the bottom inſerted,

The Part of the Old Batchelor, *to be perform'd in Imitation of the Original.*

Printed Books of the Play were ſent for in haſte, and every Actor had one, to pick out of it the Part he had choſen: Thus, while they were each of them chewing the Morſel, they had moſt mind to, ſome one happening to caſt his Eye over the *Dramatis Perſonæ*, found that the main Matter was ſtill forgot, that no body had yet been thought of for the Part of Alderman *Fondlewife*. Here we were all a-ground agen! nor was it to be conceiv'd who could make the leaſt tolerable Shift with it. This Character had been ſo admirably acted by *Dogget*, that though it is only ſeen in the Fourth Act, it may be no Diſpraiſe to the Play, to ſay, it probably ow'd the greateſt Part of its Succeſs to his Performance. But, as the Caſe was now deſperate, any Reſource was better than none. Somebody muſt ſwallow the bitter Pill, or the Play muſt die. At laſt it was recollected, that I had been heard to ſay, in my wild way of talking, what a vaſt mind I had to play *Nykin*, by which Name the Character was more frequently call'd. Notwithſtanding they were thus diſtreſs'd about the Diſpoſal of this Part, moſt of 'em ſhook their Heads, at my being mention'd for it; yet *Powell*, who was reſolv'd, at all Hazards, to fall upon *Betterton*, and having no concern for what might become of any one, that ſerv'd his Ends or Purpoſe, order'd me to be ſent for; and, as he naturally lov'd to ſet other People wrong, honeſtly ſaid, before I came, *If the Fool has a mind to blow himſelf up, at once, let us ev'n give him a clear Stage for it.* Accordingly, the Part was put into my Hands, between Eleven and Twelve that Morning, which I durſt not refuſe, becauſe others were as much ſtraitned in time, for Study, as myſelf. But I had this caſual Advantage of moſt of them; that having ſo conſtantly obſerv'd *Dogget*'s Performance,

mance, I wanted but little Trouble, to make me perfect in the Words; ſo that when it came to my Turn to rehearſe, while others read their Parts, from their Books, I had put mine in my Pocket, and went thro' the firſt Scene without it; and though I was more abaſh'd to rehearſe ſo remarkable a Part before the Actors (which is natural to moſt young People) than to act before an Audience, yet ſome of the better-natur'd encourag'd me ſo far, as to ſay, they did not think I ſhould make an ill Figure in it: To conclude, the Curioſity to ſee *Betterton* mimick'd, drew us a pretty good Audience, and *Powell* (as far as Applauſe is a Proof of it) was allow'd to have burleſqu'd him very well. As I have queſtion'd the certain Value of Applauſe, I hope I may venture, with leſs Vanity, to ſay how particular a Share I had of it, in the ſame Play. At my firſt Appearance, one might have imagin'd, by the various Murmurs of the Audience, that they were in doubt whether *Dogget* himſelf were not return'd, or that they could not conceive what ſtrange Face it could be, that ſo nearly reſembled him; for I had laid the Tint of Forty Years, more than my real Age, upon my Features, and, to the moſt minute placing of a Hair, was dreſs'd exactly like him: When I ſpoke, the Surprize was ſtill greater, as if I had not only borrow'd his Cloaths, but his Voice too. But tho' that was the leaſt difficult Part of him, to be imitated, they ſeem'd to allow, I had ſo much of him, in every other Requiſite, that my Applauſe was, perhaps, more than proportionable: For, whether I had done ſo much, where ſo little was expected, or that the Generoſity of my Hearers were more than uſually zealous, upon ſo unexpected an Occaſion, or from what other Motive ſuch Favour might be pour'd upon me, I cannot ſay; but, in plain and honeſt Truth, upon my going off from the firſt Scene, a much better Actor might have been proud of the Applauſe, that follow'd me; after one loud *Plaudit* was ended, and ſunk into a general Whiſper, that ſeem'd ſtill to continue their private Approbation, it reviv'd to a ſecond, and again to a third, ſtill louder than the former.

If,

If, to all this, I add, that *Dogget* himſelf was, in the Pit, at the ſame time, it would be too rank Affectation, if I ſhould not confeſs, that, to ſee him there a Witneſs of my Reception, was, to me, as conſummate a Triumph, as the Heart of Vanity could be indulg'd with. But whatever Vanity I might ſet upon my ſelf, from this unexpected Succeſs, I found that was no Rule to other People's Judgment of me. There were few or no Parts, of the ſame kind, to be had; nor could they conceive, from what I had done in this, what other ſort of Characters I could be fit for. If I ſollicited for any thing of a different Nature, I was anſwer'd, *That was not in my Way.* And what *was* in my Way, it ſeems, was not, as yet, reſolv'd upon. And though I reply'd, *That I thought any thing, naturally written, ought to be in every one's Way that pretended to be an Actor*; this was look'd upon as a vain, impracticable Conceit of my own. Yet it is a Conceipt, that, in forty Years farther Experience, I have not yet given up; I ſtill think, that a Painter, who can draw but one ſort of Object, or an Actor that ſhines, but in one Light, can neither of them boaſt of that ample Genius, which is neceſſary to form a thorough Maſter of his Art: For tho' Genius may have a particular Inclination, yet a good Hiſtory-Painter, or a good Actor, will, without being at a loſs, give you, upon Demand, a proper Likeneſs of whatever Nature produces. If he cannot do this, he is only an Actor, as the Shoemaker was allow'd a limited Judge of *Appelles*'s Painting; but *not beyond his Laſt.* Now, tho' to do any one thing well, may have more Merit, than we often meet with; and may be enough, to procure a Man the Name of a good Actor, from the Publick; yet, in my Opinion, it is but ſtill the Name, without the Subſtance. If his Talent is in ſuch narrow Bounds, that he dares not ſtep out of them, to look upon the Singularities of Mankind, and cannot catch them, in whatever Form they preſent themſelves; if he is not Maſter of the *Quicquid agunt homines*, &c. in any Shape, that Human Nature is fit to be ſeen in; if he cannot

change himſelf into ſeveral diſtinct Perſons, ſo as to vary his whole Tone of Voice, his Motion, his Look, and Geſture, whether in high, or lower Life, and, at the ſame time, keep cloſe to thoſe Variations, without leaving the Character they ſingly belong to; if his beſt Skill, falls ſhort of this Capacity, what Pretence have we to call him a complete Maſter of his Art? And tho' I do not inſiſt, that he ought always to ſhew himſelf, in theſe various Lights, yet, before we compliment him with that Title, he ought, at leaſt, by ſome few Proofs, to let us ſee, that he has them all, in his Power. If I am ask'd, who, ever, arriv'd at this imaginary Excellence, I confeſs, the Inſtances are very few; but I will venture to name *Monfort*, as one of them, whoſe Theatrical Character I have given, in my laſt Chapter: For, in his Youth, he had acted Low Humour, with great Succeſs, even down to *Tallboy* in the *Jovial Crew*; and when he was in great Eſteem, as a Tragedian, he was, in Comedy, the moſt complete Gentleman that I ever ſaw upon the Stage. Let me add too, that *Betterton*, in his declining Age, was as eminent, in Sir *John Falſtaff*, as in the Vigour of it, in his *Othello*.

While I thus meaſure the Value of an Actor, by the Variety of Shapes he is able to throw himſelf into, you may naturally ſuſpect, that I am all this while, leading my own Theatrical Character into your Favour: Why, really, to ſpeak as an honeſt Man, I cannot wholly deny it: But in this, I ſhall endeavour to be no farther partial to myſelf, than known Facts will make me; from the good, or bad Evidence of which, your better Judgment will condemn, or acquit me. And to ſhew you, that I will conceal no Truth, that is againſt me, I frankly own, that had I been always left, to my own choice of Characters, I am doubtful whether I might ever have deſerv'd an equal Share of that Eſtimation, which the Publick ſeem'd to have held me in: Nor am I ſure, that it was not Vanity in me, often to have ſuſpected, that I was kept out of the Parts, I had moſt mind to,

by

by the Jealouſy, or Prejudice of my Cotemporaries; ſome Inſtances of which, I could give you, were they not too ſlight, to be remember'd: In the mean time, be pleas'd to obſerve, how ſlowly, in my younger Days, my Good-fortune came forward.

My early Succeſs in the *Old Batchelor*, of which I have given ſo full an Account, having open'd no farther way to my Advancement, was enough, perhaps, to have made a young Fellow of more Modeſty deſpair; but being of a Temper not eaſily diſhearten'd, I reſolv'd to leave nothing unattempted, that might ſhew me, in ſome new Rank of Diſtinction. Having then no other Reſource, I was at laſt reduc'd to write a Character for myſelf; but as that was not finiſh'd till about a Year after, I could not, in the Interim, procure any one Part, that gave me the leaſt Inclination to act it; and conſequently, ſuch as I got, I perform'd with a proportionable Negligence. But this Misfortune, if it were one, you are not to wonder at; for the ſame Fate attended me, more, or leſs, to the laſt Days of my remaining on the Stage. What Defect in me, this may have been owing to, I have not yet had Senſe enough to find out, but I ſoon found out as good a thing, which was, never to be mortify'd at it: Though I am afraid this ſeeming Philoſophy was rather owing to my Inclination to Pleaſure, than Buſineſs. But to my Point. The next Year I produc'd the Comedy of *Love's laſt Shift*; yet the Difficulty of getting it to the Stage, was not eaſily ſurmounted; for, at that time, as little was expected from me, as an Author, as had been from my Pretenſions to be an Actor. However, Mr. *Southern*, the Author of *Oroonoko*, having had the Patience to hear me read it, to him, happened to like it ſo well, that he immediately recommended it to the Patentees, and it was accordingly acted in *January* 1695. In this Play, I gave myſelf the Part of Sir *Novelty*, which was thought, a good Portrait of the Foppery then in faſhion. Here too, Mr. *Southern*, though he had approv'd my Play, came into the common Diffidence of me, as an Actor: For, when on the firſt

Day of it, I was ſtanding, myſelf, to prompt the *Prologue*, he took me by the Hand, and ſaid, *Young Man! I pronounce thy Play a good one; I will anſwer for its Succeſs, if thou doſt not ſpoil it by thy own Action.* Though this might be a fair *Salvo*, for his favourable Judgment of the Play; yet if it were his real Opinion of me, as an Actor, I had the good Fortune to deceive him: I ſucceeded ſo well, in both, that People ſeem'd at a Loſs, which they ſhould give the Preference to. But (now let me ſhew a little more Vanity, and my Apology for it, ſhall come after) the Compliment which my Lord *Dorſet* (then Lord Chamberlain) made me upon it, is, I own, what I had rather not ſuppreſs, *viz. That it was the beſt, Firſt Play, that any Author in his Memory, had produc'd; and that for a young Fellow, to ſhew himſelf ſuch an Actor, and ſuch a Writer, in one Day, was ſomething extraordinary.* But as this noble Lord has been celebrated for his Good-nature, I am contented, that as much of this Compliment ſhould be ſuppos'd to exceed my Deſerts, as may be imagin'd to have been heighten'd, by his generous Inclination to encourage a young Beginner. If this Excuſe cannot ſoften the Vanity of telling a Truth ſo much, in my own Favour, I muſt lie, at the Mercy of my Reader. But there was a ſtill higher Compliment paſs'd upon me, which I may publiſh without Vanity, becauſe it was not a deſign'd one, and apparently came from my Enemies, *viz.* That, to their certain Knowledge *it was not my own:* This Report is taken notice of in my Dedication to the Play. If they ſpoke Truth, if they knew what other Perſon it really belong'd to, I will, at leaſt allow them true to their Truſt; for above forty Years have ſince paſt, and they have not yet reveal'd the Secret.

The new Light, in which the Character of Sir *Novelty* had ſhewn me, one might have thought, were enough, to have diſſipated the Doubts, of what I might now, be poſſibly good for. But to whatever Chance, my Ill-fortune was due; whether I had ſtill, but little Merit, or that the Menagers, if I had any,

were

were not competent Judges of it; or whether I was not generally elbow'd, by other Actors (which I am moſt inclin'd to think the true Cauſe) when any freſh Parts were to be diſpos'd of, not one Part of any conſequence was I preferr'd to, 'till the Year following: Then, indeed, from Sir *John Vanbrugh*'s favourable Opinion of me, I began, with others, to have a better of myſelf: For he not only did me Honour, as an Author, by writing his *Relapſe*, as a Sequel, or Second Part, to *Love's laſt Shift*; but as an Actor too, by preferring me, to the chief Character in his own Play; (which from Sir *Novelty*) he had ennobled by the Style of Baron of *Foppington*. This Play (the *Relapſe*) from its new, and eaſy Turn of Wit, had great Succeſs, and gave me, as a Comedian, a ſecond Flight of Reputation along with it.

As the Matter I write muſt be very flat, or impertinent, to thoſe, who have no Taſte, or Concern for the Stage; and may to thoſe, who delight in it too, be equally tedious, when I talk of no body but myſelf; I ſhall endeavour to relieve your Patience, by a Word or two more of this Gentleman, ſo far as he lent his Pen to the Support of the Theatre.

Though the *Relapſe* was the firſt Play this agreeable Author produc'd, yet it was not, it ſeems, the firſt he had written; for he had at that time, by him, (more than) all the Scenes, that were acted of the *Provok'd Wife*; but being then doubtful, whether he ſhould ever truſt them to the Stage, he thought no more of it: But after the Succeſs of the *Relapſe*, he was more ſtrongly importun'd, than able, to refuſe it to the Publick. Why the laſt written Play was firſt acted, and for what Reaſon they were given to different Stages, what follows, will explain.

In his firſt Step, into publick Life, when he was but an Enſign, and had a Heart above his Income, he happen'd ſomewhere, at his Winter-Quarters, upon a very ſlender Acquaintance with Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, to receive a particular Obligation from him, which he had not forgot at the Time I am ſpeaking of:

of: When Sir *Thomas*'s Intereſt, in the Theatrical Patent (for he had a large Share in it, though he little concern'd himſelf in the Conduct of it) was riſing but very ſlowly, he thought, that to give it a Lift, by a new Comedy, if it ſucceeded, might be the handſomeſt Return he could make to thoſe his former Favours; and having obſerv'd, that in *Love's laſt Shift*, moſt of the Actors had acquitted themſelves, beyond what was expected of them; he took a ſudden Hint from what he lik'd, in that Play, and in leſs than three Months, in the beginning of *April* following, brought us the *Relapſe* finiſh'd; but the Seaſon being then too far advanc'd, it was not acted 'till the ſucceeding Winter. Upon the Succeſs of the *Relapſe*, the late Lord *Hallifax*, who was a great Favourer of *Betterton*'s Company, having formerly, by way of Family-Amuſement, heard the *Provok'd Wife* read to him, in its looſer Sheets, engag'd Sir *John Vanbrugh* to reviſe it, and give it to the Theatre in *Lincolns-Inn Fields*. This was a Requeſt not to be refus'd to ſo eminent a Patron of the Muſes, as the Lord *Hallifax*, who was equally a Friend and Admirer of Sir *John* himſelf. Nor was Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, in the leaſt diſobliged, by ſo reaſonable a Compliance: After which, Sir *John* was agen at liberty, to repeat his Civilities to his Friend, Sir *Thomas*; and about the ſame time, or not long after, gave us the Comedy of *Æſop*; for his Inclination always led him to ſerve Sir *Thomas*. Beſides, our Company, about this time, began to be look'd upon, in another Light; the late Contempt we had lain under, was now wearing off, and from the Succeſs of two or three new Plays, our Actors, by being Originals in a few good Parts, where they had not the Diſadvantage of Compariſon againſt them, ſometimes found new Favour, in thoſe old Plays, where others had exceeded them.

Of this Good-fortune, perhaps, I had more than my Share, from the two very different, chief Characters, I had ſucceeded in; for I was equally approv'd in *Æſop*, as the *Lord Foppington*, allowing the Difference, to be no leſs, than as Wiſdom, in a Perſon

ſon deform'd, may be leſs entertaining to the general Taſte, than Folly and Foppery, finely dreſt: For the Character that delivers Precepts of Wiſdom, is, in ſome ſort, ſevere upon the Auditor, by ſhewing him one wiſer than himſelf. But when Folly is his Object, he applauds himſelf, for being wiſer than the Coxcomb he laughs at: And who is not more pleas'd with an Occaſion to commend, than accuſe himſelf?

Though, to write much, in a little time, is no Excuſe for writing ill; yet Sir *John Vanbrugh*'s Pen, is not to be a little admir'd, for its Spirit, Eaſe, and Readineſs, in producing Plays ſo faſt, upon the Neck of one another; for, notwithſtanding this quick Diſpatch, there is a clear and lively Simplicity in his Wit, that neither wants the Ornament of Learning, nor has the leaſt Smell of the Lamp in it. As the Face of a fine Woman, with only her Locks looſe, about her, may be then in its greateſt Beauty; ſuch were his Productions, only adorn'd by Nature. There is ſomething ſo catching to the Ear, ſo eaſy to the Memory, in all he writ, that it has been obſerv'd, by all the Actors of my Time, that the Style of no Author whatſoever, gave their Memory leſs trouble, than that of Sir *John Vanbrugh*; which I myſelf, who have been charg'd with ſeveral of his ſtrongeſt Characters, can confirm by a pleaſing Experience. And indeed his Wit, and Humour, was ſo little laboured, that his moſt entertaining Scenes ſeem'd to be no more, than his common Converſation committed to Paper. Here, I confeſs my Judgment at a Loſs, whether, in this, I give him more, or leſs, than his due Praiſe? For may it not be more laudable, to raiſe an Eſtate (whether in Wealth, or Fame) by Pains, and honeſt Induſtry, than to be born to it? Yet, if his Scenes really were, as to me they always ſeem'd, delightful, are they not, thus, expeditiouſly written, the more ſurpriſing? let the Wit, and Merit of them, then, be weigh'd by wiſer Criticks, than I pretend to be: But no wonder, while his Conceptions were ſo full of Life, and Humour, his Muſe ſhould be ſometimes too warm, to wait the ſlow

Pace

Pace of Judgment, or to endure the Drudgery, of forming a regular Fable to them: Yet we ſee the *Relapſe*, however imperfect, in the Conduct, by the mere Force of its agreeable Wit, ran away with the Hearts of its Hearers; while *Love's laſt Shift*, which (as Mr. *Congreve* juſtly ſaid of it) had only in it, a great many things, that were *like* Wit, that in reality were *not* Wit. And what is ſtill leſs pardonable (as I ſay of it myſelf) has a great deal of Puerility, and frothy Stage-Language in it, yet by the mere moral Delight receiv'd from its Fable, it has been, with the other, in a continued, and equal Poſſeſſion of the Stage, for more than forty Years.

As I have already promis'd you, to refer your Judgment of me, as an Actor, rather to known Facts, than my own Opinion, (which, I could not be ſure, would keep clear of Self-partiality) I muſt a little farther riſque my being tedious, to be as good as my Word. I have elſewhere allow'd, that my want of a ſtrong and full Voice, ſoon cut ſhort my Hopes of making any valuable Figure, in Tragedy; and I have been many Years ſince, convinced, that whatever Opinion I might have of my own Judgment, or Capacity to amend the palpable Errors, that I ſaw our Tragedians, moſt in favour, commit; yet the Auditors, who would have been ſenſible of any ſuch Amendments (could I have made them) were ſo very few, that my beſt Endeavour would have been but an unavailing Labour, or, what is yet worſe, might have appeared both to our Actors, and to many Auditors, the vain Miſtake of my own Self-Conceit: For ſo ſtrong, ſo very near indiſpenſible, is that one Article of Voice, in the forming a good Tragedian, that an Actor may want any other Qualification whatſoever, and yet have a better Chance for Applauſe, than he will ever have, with all the Skill, in the World, if his Voice is not equal to it. Miſtake me not; I ſay, for *Applauſe* only ----- but Applauſe does not always ſtay for, nor always follow intrinſick Merit; Applauſe will frequently open, like a young Hound, upon a wrong Scent; and the Majority of Auditors, you know,

are

are generally compos'd of Babblers, that are profuſe of their Voices, before there is any thing on foot, that calls for them: Not but, I grant, to lead, or miſlead the Many, will always ſtand in ſome Rank of a neceſſary Merit; yet when I ſay a good Tragedian, I mean one, in Opinion of whoſe *real* Merit, the beſt Judges would agree.

Having ſo far given up my Pretenſions to the Buskin, I ought now to account for my having been, notwithſtanding, ſo often ſeen, in ſome particular Characters in Tragedy, as *Jago*, *Wolſey*, *Syphax*, *Richard* the *Third*, *&c.* If, in any of this kind I have ſucceeded, perhaps it has been a Merit dearly purchas'd; for, from the Delight I ſeem'd to take in my performing them, half my Auditors have been perſuaded, that a great Share of the Wickedneſs of them, muſt have been in my own Nature: If this is true, as true I fear (I had almoſt ſaid hope) it is, I look upon it rather as a Praiſe, than Cenſure of my Performance. Averſion there is an involuntary Commendation, where we are only hated, for being like the thing, we *ought* to be like; a ſort of Praiſe however, which few Actors beſides my ſelf could endure: Had it been equal to the uſual Praiſe given to Vertue, my Cotemporaries would have thought themſelves injur'd, if I had pretended to any Share of it: So that you ſee, it has been, as much the Diſlike others had to them, as Choice, that has thrown me ſometimes into theſe Characters. But it may be farther obſerv'd, that in the Characters I have nam'd, where there is ſo much cloſe meditated Miſchief, Deceit, Pride, Inſolence, or Cruelty, they cannot have the leaſt Caſt, or Profer of the Amiable in them; conſequently, there can be no great Demand for that harmonious Sound, or pleaſing, round Melody of Voice, which in the ſofter Sentiments of Love, the Wailings of diſtreſsful Virtue, or in the Throws and Swellings of Honour, and Ambition, may be needful to recommend them to our Pity, or Admiration: So that again my want of that requiſite Voice might leſs diſqualify me for the vicious, than the virtuous Character. This too may have been

a more favourable Reaſon for my having been choſen for them--- a yet farther Conſideration, that inclin'd me to them, was that they are generally better written, thicker ſown, with ſenſible Reflections, and come by ſo much nearer to common Life, and Nature, than Characters of Admiration, as Vice is more the Practice of Mankind than Virtue: Nor could I ſometimes help ſmiling, at thoſe dainty Actors, that were too ſqueamiſh to ſwallow them! as if they were one Jot the better Men, for acting a good Man well, or another Man the worſe, for doing equal Juſtice to a bad one! 'Tis not, ſure, *what* we act, but *how* we act what is allotted us, that ſpeaks our intrinſick Value! as in real Life, the wiſe Man, or the Fool, be he Prince, or Peaſant, will, in either State, be equally the Fool, or the wiſe Man--- but alas! in perſonated Life, this is no Rule to the Vulgar! they are apt to think all before them real, and rate the Actor according to his borrow'd Vice, or Virtue.

If then I had always too careleſs a Concern for falſe, or vulgar Applauſe, I ought not to complain, if I have had leſs of it, than others of my Time, or not leſs of it, than I deſir'd: Yet I will venture to ſay, that from the common, weak Appetite of falſe Applauſe, many Actors have run into more Errors, and Abſurdities, than their greateſt Ignorance could otherwiſe have committed: If this Charge is true, it will lie chiefly upon the better Judgment of the Spectator to reform it.

But not to make too great a Merit of my avoiding this common Road to Applauſe, perhaps I was vain enough to think, I had more ways, than one, to come at it. That, in the Variety of Characters I acted, the Chances to win it, were the ſtronger on my Side--- That, if the Multitude were not in a Roar, to ſee me, in *Cardinal Wolſey*, I could be ſure of them in Alderman *Fondlewife*. If they hated me in *Jago*, in Sir *Fopling* they took me for a fine Gentleman; if they were ſilent at *Syphax*, no *Italian* Eunuch was more applauded than when I ſung in Sir *Courtly*. If the Morals of *Æſop* were too grave for them, Juſtice *Shallow* was

was as ſimple, and as merry an old Rake, as the wiſeſt of our young ones could wiſh me. And though the Terror and Deteſtation rais'd by King *Richard*, might be too ſevere a Delight for them, yet the more gentle and modern Vanities of a Poet *Bays*, or the well-bred Vices of a Lord *Foppington*, were not at all, more than their merry Hearts, or nicer Morals could bear.

Theſe few Inſtances out of fifty more I could give you, may ſerve to explain, what ſort of Merit, I at moſt pretended to; which was, that I ſupply'd, with Variety, whatever I might want of that particular Skill, wherein others went before me. How this Variety was executed (for by that only is its value to be rated) you who have ſo often been my Spectator, are the proper Judge: If you pronounce my Performance to have been defective, I am condemn'd by my own Evidence; if you acquit me, theſe Out-lines may ſerve for a Sketch of my Theatrical Character.

CHAP. VII.

The State of the Stage continued. The Occaſion of Wilks's *commencing Actor. His Succeſs. Facts relating to his Theatrical Talent. Actors more or leſs eſteem'd from their private Characters.*

THE *Lincolns-Inn-Fields* Company were, now in 1693, a Common-wealth, like that of *Holland*, divided from the Tyranny of *Spain:* But the Similitude goes very little farther; ſhort was the Duration of the Theatrical Power! for though Succeſs pour'd in ſo faſt upon them, at their firſt Opening, that every thing ſeem'd to ſupport it ſelf; yet Experience, in a Year or two ſhew'd them, that they had never been worſe govern'd, than when they govern'd themſelves! many of them began to make

their particular Intereſt more their Point, than that of the general: and though ſome Deference might be had to the Meaſures, and Advice of *Betterton*, ſeveral of them wanted to govern, in their Turn; and were often out of Humour, that their Opinion was not equally regarded--- But have we not ſeen the ſame Infirmity in Senates? The Tragedians ſeem'd to think their Rank as much above the Comedians, as in the Characters they ſeverally acted; when the firſt were in their Finery, the latter were impatient, at the Expence; and look'd upon it, as rather laid out, upon the real, than the fictitious Perſon of the Actor; nay, I have known, in our own Company, this ridiculous ſort of Regret carry'd ſo far, that the Tragedian has thought himſelf injur'd, when the *Comedian* pretended to wear a fine Coat! I remember *Powel*, upon ſurveying my firſt Dreſs, in the *Relapſe*, was out of all temper, and reproach'd our Maſter in very rude Terms, that he had not ſo good a Suit to play *Cæſar Borgia* in! tho' he knew, at the ſame time, my Lord *Foppington* fill'd the Houſe, when his bouncing *Borgia* would do little more than pay Fiddles, and Candles to it: And though a Character of Vanity, might be ſuppos'd more expenſive in Dreſs, than poſſibly one of Ambition; yet the high Heart of this heroical Actor could not bear, that a Comedian ſhould ever pretend to be as well dreſs'd as himſelf. Thus again on the contrary, when *Betterton* propos'd to ſet off a Tragedy, the Comedians were ſure to murmur at the Charge of it: And the late Reputation which *Dogget* had acquir'd, from acting his *Ben*, in *Love* for *Love*, made him a more declar'd Male-content on ſuch Occaſions; he over-valu'd Comedy for its being nearer to Nature, than Tragedy; which is allow'd to ſay many fine things, that Nature never ſpoke, in the ſame Words; and ſuppoſing his Opinion were juſt, yet he ſhould have conſider'd, that the Publick had a Taſte, as well as himſelf; which, in Policy, he ought to have comply'd with. *Dogget* however could not, with Patience, look upon the coſtly Trains and Plumes of Tragedy, in which knowing

ing himſelf to be uſeleſs, he thought were all a vain Extravagance: And when he found his Singularity could no longer oppoſe that Expence, he ſo obſtinately adhered to his own Opinion, that he left the Society of his old Friends, and came over to us at the *Theatre-Royal:* And yet this Actor always ſet up for a Theatrical Patriot. This happen'd in the Winter following the firſt Diviſion of the (only) Company. He came time enough to the *Theatre-Royal*, to act the Part of *Lory*, in the *Relapſe*, an arch Valet, quite after the *French* caſt, pert, and familiar. But it ſuited ſo ill with *Dogget*'s dry, and cloſely-natural manner of acting, that upon the ſecond Day he deſir'd it might be diſpos'd of to another; which the Author complying with, gave it to *Penkethman*; who though, in other Lights, much his Inferior, yet this Part he ſeem'd better to become. *Dogget* was ſo immoveable in his Opinion of whatever he thought was right, or wrong, that he could never be eaſy, under any kind of Theatrical Government; and was generally ſo warm, in purſuit of his Intereſt, that he often out-ran it; I remember him three times, for ſome Years, unemploy'd in any Theatre, from his not being able to bear, in common with others, the diſagreeable Accidents, that in ſuch Societies are unavoidable. But whatever Pretences he had form'd for this firſt deſerting, from *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, I always thought his beſt Reaſon for it, was, that he look'd upon it as a ſinking Ship; not only from the melancholy Abatement of their Profits, but likewiſe from the Neglect, and Diſorder in their Government: He plainly ſaw, that their extraordinary Succeſs at firſt, had made them too confident of its Duration, and from thence had ſlacken'd their Induſtry--- by which he obſerv'd, at the ſame time, the old Houſe, where there was ſcarce any other Merit than Induſtry, began to flouriſh. And indeed they ſeem'd not enough to conſider, that the Appetite of the Publick, like that of a fine Gentleman, could only be kept warm, by Variety; that let their Merit be never ſo high, yet the Taſte of a Town was not al-

ways

ways conſtant, nor infallible: That it was dangerous to hold their Rivals in too much Contempt; for they found, that a young induſtrious Company were ſoon a Match, for the beſt Actors, when too ſecurely negligent: And negligent they certainly were, and fondly fancy'd, that had each of their different Schemes been follow'd, their Audiences would not ſo ſuddenly have fallen off.

But alas! the Vanity of applauded Actors, when they are not crowded to, as they may have been, makes them naturally impute the Change to any Cauſe, rather than the true one, Satiety: They are mighty loath, to think a Town, once ſo fond of them, could ever be tired; and yet, at one time, or other, more or leſs, thin Houſes have been the certain Fate of the moſt proſperous Actors, ever ſince I remember the Stage! But againſt this Evil, the provident Patentees had found out a Relief, which the new Houſe were not yet Maſters of, *viz.* Never to pay their People, when the Mony did not come in; nor then neither, but in ſuch Proportions, as ſuited their Conveniency. I my ſelf was one of the many, who for ſix acting Weeks together, never receiv'd one Day's Pay; and for ſome Years after, ſeldom had above half our nominal Sallaries: But to the beſt of my Memory, the Finances of the other Houſe, held it not above one Seaſon more, before they were reduc'd to the ſame Expedient of making the like ſcanty Payments.

Such was the Diſtreſs, and Fortune of both theſe Companies, ſince their Diviſion, from the *Theatre-Royal*; either working at half Wages, or by alternate Succeſſes, intercepting the Bread from one another's Mouths; irreconcileable Enemies, yet without Hope of Relief, from a Victory on either ſide; ſometimes both Parties reduc'd, and yet each ſupporting their Spirits, by ſeeing the other under the ſame Calamity.

During this State of the Stage, it was, that the loweſt Expedient was made uſe of, to ingratiate our Company, in the Publick Favour: Our Maſter, who had ſome time practis'd the Law,

and

and therefore lov'd a Storm, better than fair Weather (for it was his own Conduct chiefly, that had brought the Patent into theſe Dangers) took nothing ſo much to Heart, as that Partiality, wherewith he imagin'd the People of Quality had preferr'd the Actors of the other Houſe, to thoſe of his own: To ballance this Misfortune, he was reſolv'd, at leaſt, to be well with their Domeſticks, and therefore cunningly open'd the upper Gallery to them *gratis:* For before this time no Footman was ever admitted, or had preſum'd to come into it, till after the fourth Act was ended: This additional Privilege (the greateſt Plague that ever Play-houſe had to complain of) he conceiv'd would not only incline them, to give us a good Word, in the reſpective Families they belong'd to, but would naturally incite them, to come all Hands aloft, in the Crack of our Applauſes: And indeed it ſo far ſucceeded, that it often thunder'd from the full Gallery above, while our thin Pit, and Boxes below, were in the utmoſt Serenity. This riotous Privilege, ſo craftily given, and which from Cuſtom, was at laſt ripen'd into Right, became the moſt diſgraceful Nuſance, that ever depreciated the Theatre. How often have the moſt polite Audiences, in the moſt affecting Scenes of the beſt Plays, been diſturb'd and inſulted, by the Noiſe and Clamour of theſe ſavage Spectators? From the ſame narrow way of thinking too, were ſo many ordinary People, and unlick'd Cubs of Condition, admitted behind our Scenes, for Money, and ſometimes without it: The Plagues, and Inconveniences of which Cuſtom, we found ſo intollerable, when we afterwards had the Stage in our Hands, that at the Hazard of our Lives, we were forc'd to get rid of them; and our only Expedient was, by refuſing Money from all Perſons, without diſtinction, at the Stage Door; by this means we preſerv'd to our ſelves the Right and Liberty of chuſing our own Company there: And by a ſtrict Obſervance of this Order, we brought what had been before debas'd into all the Licenſes of a Lobby, into the Decencies of a Drawing-Room.

About

About the diſtreſsful Time I was ſpeaking of, in the Year 1696, *Wilks*, who now had been five Years in great Eſteem on the *Dublin* Theatre, return'd to that of *Drury-Lane*; in which laſt he had firſt ſet out, and had continued to act ſome ſmall Parts, for one Winter only. The conſiderable Figure which he ſo lately made upon the Stage in *London*, makes me imagine that a particular Account of his firſt commencing Actor may not be unacceptable, to the Curious; I ſhall, therefore, give it them, as I had it, from his own Mouth.

In King *James*'s Reign he had been ſome time employ'd in the Secretary's Office in *Ireland* (his native Country) and remain'd in it, till after the Battle of the *Boyn*, which completed the Revolution. Upon that happy, and unexpected Deliverance, the People of *Dublin*, among the various Expreſſions of their Joy, had a Mind to have a Play; but the Actors being diſpers'd, during the War, ſome private Perſons agreed, in the beſt manner they were able, to give one, to the Publick, *gratis*, at the *Theatre*. The Play was *Othello*, in which *Wilks* acted the *Moor*; and the Applauſe he receiv'd in it, warm'd him to ſo ſtrong an Inclination for the Stage, that he immediately prefer'd it to all his other Views in Life: For he quitted his Poſt, and with the firſt fair Occaſion came over, to try his Fortune, in the (then only) Company of Actors in *London*. The Perſon, who ſupply'd his Poſt, in *Dublin*, he told me, rais'd to himſelf, from thence, a Fortune of fifty thouſand Pounds. Here you have a much ſtronger Inſtance of an extravagant Paſſion for the Stage, than that, which I have elſewhere ſhewn in my ſelf; I only quitted my *Hopes* of being preferr'd to the like Poſt, for it; but *Wilks* quitted his actual *Poſſeſſion*, for the imaginary Happineſs, which the Life of an Actor preſented to him. And, though poſſibly, we might both have better'd our Fortunes, in a more honourable Station, yet whether better Fortunes might have equally gratify'd our Vanity (the univerſal Paſſion of Mankind) may admit of a Queſtion.

Upon

Upon his being formerly receiv'd into the *Theatre-Royal* (which was in the Winter after I had been initiated) his Station there was much upon the ſame Claſs, with my own; our Parts were generally of an equal Inſignificancy, not of conſequence enough to give either a Preference: But *Wilks* being more impatient of his low Condition, than I was, (and, indeed, the Company was then ſo well ſtock'd with good Actors, that there was very little hope of getting forward) laid hold of a more expeditious way for his Advancement, and return'd agen to *Dublin*, with Mr. *Aſhbury*, the Patentee of that Theatre, to act in his new Company there: There went with him, at the ſame time, Mrs. *Butler*, whoſe Character I have already given, and *Eſtcourt*, who had not appear'd upon any Stage, and was yet only known as an excellent Mimick: *Wilks* having no Competitor in *Dublin*, was immediately preferr'd to whatever Parts his Inclination led him, and his early Reputation on that Stage, as ſoon rais'd, in him, an Ambition to ſhew himſelf on a better. And I have heard him ſay (in Raillery of the Vanity, which young Actors are liable to) that when the News of *Monfort*'s Death came to *Ireland*, he from that time thought his Fortune was made, and took a Reſolution to return a ſecond time to *England*, with the firſt Opportunity; but as his Engagements to the Stage, where he was, were too ſtrong to be ſuddenly broke from, he return'd not to the *Theatre-Royal*, 'till the Year 1696.

Upon his firſt Arrival, *Powel*, who was now in poſſeſſion of all the chief Parts of *Monfort*, and the only Actor that ſtood in *Wilks*'s way; in ſeeming Civility, offer'd him his choice of whatever he thought fit, to make his firſt Appearance in; tho', in reality, the Favour was intended to hurt him. But *Wilks* rightly judg'd it more modeſt, to accept only of a Part of *Powel*'s, and which *Monfort* had never acted, that of *Palamede* in *Dryden*'s *Marriage Alamode*. Here too, he had the Advantage of having the Ball play'd into his Hand, by the inimitable Mrs. *Monfort*, who was then his *Melantha* in the ſame Play:

Whatever Fame *Wilks* had brought with him, from *Ireland*, he as yet appear'd but a very raw Actor, to what he was afterwards allow'd to be: His Faults however, I ſhall rather leave to the Judgments of thoſe, who then may remember him, than to take upon me the diſagreeable Office of being particular upon them, farther than by ſaying, that in this Part of *Palamede*, he was ſhort of *Powel*, and miſs'd a good deal of the looſe Humour of the Character, which the other more happily hit. But however, he was young, erect, of a pleaſing Aſpect, and, in the whole, gave the Town, and the Stage, ſufficient Hopes of him. I ought to make ſome Allowances too, for the Reſtraint he muſt naturally have been under, from his firſt Appearance upon a new Stage. But from that he ſoon recovered, and grew daily, more in Favour not only of the Town, but likewiſe of the Patentee, whom *Powel*, before *Wilks*'s Arrival, had treated, in almoſt what manner he pleas'd.

Upon this viſible Succeſs of *Wilks*, the pretended Contempt, which *Powel* had held him in, began to ſour into an open Jealouſy; he, now, plainly ſaw, he was a formidable Rival, and (which more hurt him) ſaw too, that other People ſaw it; and therefore found it high time, to oppoſe, and be troubleſome to him. But *Wilks* happening to be as jealous of his Fame, as the other, you may imagine ſuch claſhing Candidates could not be long without a Rupture: In ſhort, a Challenge, I very well remember, came from *Powel*, when he was hot-headed; but the next Morning he was cool enough, to let it end, in favour of *Wilks*. Yet however the Magnanimity, on either Part, might ſubſide, the Animoſity was as deep in the Heart, as ever, tho' it was not afterwards ſo openly avow'd: For when *Powel* found that intimidating would not carry his Point; but that *Wilks*, when provok'd, would really give Battle, he (*Powel*) grew ſo out of Humour, that he cock'd his Hat, and in his Paſſion walk'd off, to the Service of the Company, in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*. But there, finding more Competitors, and

that

that he made a worſe Figure among them, than in the Company he came from, he ſtaid but one Winter with them, before he return'd to his old Quarters, in *Drury-Lane*; where, after theſe unſucceſsful Puſhes of his Ambition, he, at laſt became a Martyr to Negligence, and quietly ſubmitted to the Advantages, and Superiority, which (during his late Deſertion) *Wilks* had more eaſily got over him.

However trifling theſe Theatrical Anecdotes may ſeem, to a ſenſible Reader, yet, as the different Conduct of theſe rival Actors may be of uſe, to others of the ſame Profeſſion, and from thence may contribute to the Pleaſure of the Publick; let that be my Excuſe, for purſuing them. I muſt, therefore, let it be known, that though, in Voice, and Ear, Nature had been more kind to *Powel*, yet he ſo often loſt the Value of them, by an unheedful Confidence, that the conſtant wakeful Care, and Decency, of *Wilks*, left the other far behind, in the publick Eſteem, and Approbation. Nor was his Memory leſs tenacious than that of *Wilks*; but *Powel* put too much Truſt in it, and idly deferr'd the Studying of his Parts, as School-boys do their Exerciſe, to the laſt Day; which commonly brings them out proportionably defective. But *Wilks* never loſt an Hour of precious Time, and was, in all his Parts, perfect, to ſuch an Exactitude, that I queſtion, if in forty Years, he ever five times chang'd or miſplac'd an Article, in any one of them. To be Maſter of this uncommon Diligence, is adding, to the Gift of Nature, all that is in an Actor's Power; and this Duty of Studying perfect, whatever Actor is remiſs in, he will proportionably find, that Nature may have been kind to him, in vain: For though *Powel* had an Aſſurance, that cover'd this Neglect much better, than a Man of more Modeſty might have done; yet with all his Intrepidity, very often the Diffidence, and Concern for what he was to *ſay*, made him loſe the Look of what he was to *be*: While, therefore, *Powel* preſided, his idle Example made this Fault ſo common to others, that I cannot but confeſs, in the

general Infection, I had my Share of it; nor was my too critical Excuſe for it, a good one, *viz.* That ſcarce one Part, in five, that fell to my Lot, was worth the Labour. But to ſhew Reſpect to an Audience, is worth the beſt Actor's Labour, and, his Buſineſs conſidered, he muſt be a very impudent one, that comes before them, with a conſcious Negligence of what he is about. But *Wilks* was never known, to make any of theſe venial Diſtinctions; nor however barren his Part might be, could bear even the Self-Reproach of favouring his Memory: And I have been aſtoniſhed, to ſee him ſwallow a Volume of Froth, and Inſipidity, in a new Play, that we were ſure could not live above three Days, tho' favoured, and recommended to the Stage, by ſome good Perſon of Quality. Upon ſuch Occaſions, in compaſſion to his fruitleſs Toil, and Labour, I have ſometimes cry'd out with *Cato*----- *Painful Præeminence!* So inſupportable, in my Senſe, was the Task, when the bare Praiſe, of not having been negligent, was ſure to be the only Reward of it. But ſo indefatigable was the Diligence of *Wilks*, that he ſeem'd to love it, as a good Man does Virtue, for its own ſake; of which the following Inſtance will give you an extraordinary Proof.

In ſome new Comedy, he happen'd to complain of a crabbed Speech in his Part, which, he ſaid, gave him more trouble to ſtudy, than all the reſt of it had done; upon which, he apply'd to the Author, either to ſoften, or ſhorten it. The Author, that he might make the matter quite eaſy to him, fairly cut it all out. But when he got home, from the Rehearſal, *Wilks* thought it ſuch an Indignity to his Memory, that any thing ſhould be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himſelf perfect in that Speech, though he knew it was never to be made uſe of. From this ſingular Act of Supererogation, you may judge, how indefatigable the Labour of his Memory muſt have been, when his Profit, and Honour, were more concern'd to make uſe of it.

But

But beſides this indiſpenſable Quality of Diligence, *Wilks* had the Advantage of a ſober Character, in private Life, which *Powel* not having the leaſt Regard to, labour'd under the unhappy Diſfavour, not to ſay, Contempt, of the Publick, to whom his licentious Courſes were no Secret: Even when he did well, that natural Prejudice purſu'd him; neither the Heroe, nor the Gentleman; the young *Ammon*, nor the *Dorimant*, could conceal, from the conſcious Spectator, the True *George Powel.* And this ſort of Diſeſteem, or Favour, every Actor, will feel, and more, or leſs, have his Share of, as he *has*, or has *not*, a due Regard to his private Life, and Reputation. Nay, even falſe Reports ſhall affect him, and become the Cauſe, or Pretence at leaſt, of undervaluing, or treating him injuriouſly. Let me give a known Inſtance of it, and, at the ſame time, a Juſtification of myſelf, from an Imputation, that was laid upon me, not many Years, before I quitted the Theatre, of which you will ſee the Conſequence.

After the vaſt Succeſs of that new Species of Dramatick Poetry, the *Beggars Opera:* The Year following, I was ſo ſtupid, as to attempt ſomething of the ſame Kind, upon a quite different Foundation, that of recommending Virtue, and Innocence; which I ignorantly thought, might not have a leſs Pretence to Favour, than ſetting Greatneſs, and Authority, in a contemptible, and the moſt vulgar Vice, and Wickedneſs, in an amiable Light. But behold how fondly I was miſtaken! *Love in a Riddle* (for ſo my new-fangled Performance was call'd) was as vilely damn'd, and hooted at, as ſo vain a Preſumption, in the idle Cauſe of Virtue, could deſerve. Yet this is not what I complain of; I will allow my Poetry, to have been as much below the other, as Taſte, or Criticiſm, can ſink it: I will grant likewiſe, that the applauded Author of the *Beggars Opera* (whom I knew to be an honeſt good-natur'd Man, and who, when he had deſcended to write more like one in the Cauſe of Virtue, had been as unfortunate, as others of that Claſs;) I will grant, I ſay, that in his *Beggars Opera,*

Opera, he had more skilfully gratify'd the Publick Taſte, than all the brighteſt Authors that ever writ before him; and I have ſometimes thought, from the Modeſty of his Motto, *Nos' hæc novimus eſſe nihil*, that he gave them that Performance, as a Satyr upon the Depravity of their Judgment (as *Ben. Johnſon*, of old, was ſaid to have given his *Bartholomew-Fair*, in Ridicule of the vulgar Taſte, which had diſlik'd his *Sejanus*) and that, by artfully ſeducing them, to be the Champions of the Immoralities he himſelf deteſted, he ſhould be amply reveng'd on their former Severity, and Ignorance. This were indeed a Triumph! which, even the Author of *Cato*, might have envy'd! *Cato*, 'tis true, ſucceeded, but reach'd not, by full forty Days, the Progreſs, and Applauſes, of the *Beggars Opera*. Will it, however, admit of a Queſtion, which of the two Compoſitions a good Writer, would rather wiſh to have been the Author of? Yet, on the other ſide, muſt we not allow, that to have taken a whole Nation, High, and Low, into a general Applauſe, has ſhewn a Power in Poetry, which, tho' often attempted in the ſame kind, none but this one Author, could ever yet arrive at? By what Rule, then, are we to judge of our true National Taſte? But, to keep a little cloſer to my Point,

The ſame Author, the next Year, had, according to the Laws of the Land, tranſported his Heroe to the *Weſt-Indies*, in a Second Part to the *Beggars Opera*; but ſo it happen'd, to the Surprize of the Publick, this Second Part was forbid to come upon the Stage! Various were the Speculations, upon this Act of Power: Some thought that the Author, others that the Town, was hardly dealt with; a third ſort, who perhaps had envy'd him the Succeſs of his Firſt Part, affirm'd, when it was printed, that whatever the Intention might be, the Fact was in his Favour, that he had been a greater Gainer, by Subſcriptions to his Copy, than he could have been by a bare Theatrical Preſentation. Whether any Part of theſe Opinions were true, I am not concern'd to determine, or conſider. But how they affected me, I am going

ing to tell you. Soon after this Prohibition, my Performance was to come upon the Stage, at a time, when many People were out of Humour, at the late Diſappointment, and ſeem'd willing to lay hold of any Pretence of making a Reprizal. Great Umbrage was taken, that I was permitted, to have the whole Town to my ſelf, by this abſolute Forbiddance of what, they had more mind to have been entertain'd with. And, ſome few Days before my Bawble was acted, I was inform'd, that a ſtrong Party would be made againſt it: This Report I ſlighted, as not conceiving why it ſhould be true; and when I was afterwards told, what was the pretended Provocation of this Party, I ſlighted it, ſtill more, as having leſs Reaſon to ſuppoſe, any Perſons could believe me capable (had I had the Power) of giving ſuch a Provocation. The Report, it ſeems, that had run againſt me, was this: That, to make way for the Succeſs of my own Play, I had privately found means, or made Intereſt, that the Second Part of the *Beggars Opera*, might be ſuppreſs'd. What an involuntary Compliment did the Reporters of this Falſhood make me? to ſuppoſe me of Conſideration enough, to influence a great Officer of State, to gratify the Spleen, or Envy, of a Comedian, ſo far, as to rob the Publick of an innocent Diverſion (if it were ſuch) that none, but that cunning Comedian, might be ſuffered to give it them. This is ſo very groſs a Suppoſition, that it needs only its own ſenſeleſs Face, to confound it; let that alone, then, be my Defence againſt it. But againſt blind Malice, and ſtaring Inhumanity, whatever is upon the Stage, has no Defence! There, they knew, I ſtood helpleſs, and expos'd, to whatever they might pleaſe to load, or aſperſe me with. I had not conſidered, poor Devil! that, from the Security of a full Pit, Dunces, might be Criticks, Cowards valiant, and 'Prentices Gentlemen! Whether any ſuch were concern'd in the Murder of my Play, I am not certain; for I never endeavour'd, to diſcover any one of its Aſſaſſins; I cannot afford them a milder Name, from their unmanly manner of deſtroying it. Had it been heard, they might

have

have left me nothing to ſay to them: 'Tis true, it faintly held up its wounded Head, a ſecond Day, and would have ſpoke for Mercy, but was not ſuffer'd. Not even the Preſence of a Royal Heir apparent, could protect it. But then I was reduc'd to be ſerious with them; their Clamour, then, became an Inſolence, which I thought it my Duty, by the Sacrifice of any Intereſt of my own, to put an end to. I therefore quitted the Actor, for the Author, and, ſtepping forward to the Pit, told them, *That ſince I found they were not inclin'd, that this Play ſhould go forward, I gave them my Word, that after this Night, it ſhould never be acted agen: But that, in the mean time, I hop'd, they would conſider, in whoſe Preſence they were, and for that Reaſon, at leaſt, would ſuſpend what farther Marks of their Diſpleaſure, they might imagine I had deſerved.* At this there was a dead Silence; and, after ſome little Pauſe, a few civiliz'd Hands, ſignify'd their Approbation. When the Play went on, I obſerv'd about a Dozen Perſons, of no extraordinary Appearance, ſullenly walk'd out of the Pit. After which, every Scene of it, while uninterrupted, met with more Applauſe, than my beſt Hopes had expected. But it came too late: Peace to its *Manes!* I had given my Word it ſhould fall, and I kept it, by giving out another Play, for the next Day, though I knew the Boxes were all lett, for the ſame again. Such, then, was the Treatment I met with: How much of it, the Errors of the Play might deſerve, I refer to the Judgment of thoſe, who may have Curioſity, and idle Time enough to read it. But if I had no occaſion to complain of the Reception it met with, from its *quieted* Audience, ſure it can be no great Vanity, to impute its Diſgraces chiefly, to that ſevere Reſentment, which a groundleſs Report of me had inflam'd: Yet thoſe Diſgraces have left me ſomething to boaſt of, an Honour preferable, even to the Applauſe of my Enemies: A noble Lord came behind the Scenes, and told me, from the Box, where he was in waiting, *That what I ſaid, to quiet the Audience, was extremely well taken there; and that I had been com-*

commended for it, in a very obliging manner. Now, though this was the only Tumult, that I have known to have been ſo effectually appeas'd, theſe fifty Years, by any thing that could be ſaid to an Audience, in the ſame Humour, I will not take any great Merit to myſelf upon it; becauſe when, like me, you will but humbly ſubmit to their doing you all the Miſchief they can, they will, at any time, be ſatisfy'd.

I have mention'd this particular Fact, to inforce what I before obſerv'd, That the private Character of an Actor, will always, more or leſs, affect his Publick Performance. And if I ſuffer'd ſo much, from the bare *Suſpicion* of my having been guilty of a baſe Action; what ſhould not an Actor expect, that is hardy enough, to think his whole private Character of no conſequence? I could offer many more, tho' leſs ſevere Inſtances, of the ſame Nature. I have ſeen the moſt tender Sentiment of Love, in Tragedy, create Laughter, inſtead of Compaſſion, when it has been applicable to the real Engagements of the Perſon, that utter'd it. I have known good Parts thrown up, from an humble Conſciouſneſs, that ſomething in them, might put an Audience in mind of --- what was rather wiſh'd might be forgotten: Thoſe remarkable Words of *Evadne*, in the *Maid's Tragedy* ------- *A Maidenhead*, Amintor, *at my Years?* --- have ſometimes been a much ſtronger Jeſt, for being a true one. But theſe are Reproaches, which, in all Nations, the Theatre muſt have been us'd to, unleſs we could ſuppoſe Actors ſomething more, than Human Creatures, void of Faults, or Frailties. 'Tis a Misfortune, at leaſt, not limited to the *Engliſh* Stage. I have ſeen the better-bred Audience, in *Paris*, made merry, even with a modeſt Expreſſion, when it has come from the Mouth of an Actreſs, whoſe private Character it ſeem'd not to belong to. The Apprehenſion of theſe kind of Fleers, from the Witlings of a Pit, has been carry'd ſo far, in our own Country, that a late valuable Actreſs (who was conſcious her Beauty was not her greateſt Merit) deſired the Warmth of ſome Lines might be abated, when they have made

her too remarkably handſome: But in this Diſcretion ſhe was alone, few others were afraid of undeſerving the fineſt things, that could be ſaid, to them. But to conſider this Matter ſeriouſly, I cannot but think, at a Play, a ſenſible Auditor would contribute all he could, to his being well deceiv'd, and not ſuffer his Imagination, ſo far to wander, from the well-acted Character before him, as to gratify a frivolous Spleen, by Mocks, or perſonal Sneers, on the Performer, at the Expence of his better Entertainment. But I muſt now take up *Wilks*, and *Powel*, again, where I left them.

Though the Contention for Superiority, between them, ſeem'd about this time, to end in favour of the former, yet the Diſtreſs of the Patentee (in having his Servant his Maſter, as *Powel* had lately been) was not much reliev'd by the Victory; he had only chang'd the Man, but not the Malady: For *Wilks*, by being in Poſſeſſion of ſo many good Parts, fell into the common Error of moſt Actors, that of over-rating their Merit, or never thinking it is ſo thoroughly conſider'd, as it ought to be; which generally makes them proportionably troubleſome to the Maſter; who, they might conſider, only pays them, to profit by them. The Patentee therefore, found it as difficult to ſatisfy the continual Demands of *Wilks*, as it was dangerous to refuſe them; very few were made, that were not granted, and as few were granted, as were not grudg'd him: Not but our good Maſter, was as ſly a Tyrant, as ever was at the Head of a Theatre; for he gave the Actors more Liberty, and fewer Days Pay, than any of his Predeceſſors: He would laugh with them over a Bottle, and bite them, in their Bargains: He kept them poor, that they might not be able to rebel; and ſometimes merry, that they might not think of it: All their Articles of Agreement had a Clauſe in them, that he was ſure to creep out at, *viz.* Their reſpective Sallaries, were to be paid, in ſuch manner, and proportion, as others of the ſame Company were paid; which in effect, made them all, when he pleas'd, but limited Sharers of Loſs, and himſelf

ſelf ſole Proprietor of Profits; and this Loſs, or Profit, they only had ſuch verbal Accounts of, as he thought proper to give them. 'Tis true, he would ſometimes advance them Money (but not more, than he knew at moſt could be due to them) upon their Bonds; upon which, whenever they were mutinous, he would threaten to ſue them. This was the Net we danc'd in for ſeveral Years: But no Wonder we were Dupes, while our Maſter was a Lawyer. This Grievance, however, *Wilks* was reſolv'd for himſelf, at leaſt, to remedy at any rate; and grew daily more intractable, for every Day his Redreſs was delay'd. Here our Maſter found himſelf under a Difficulty, he knew not well how to get out of: For as he was a cloſe ſubtle Man, he ſeldom made uſe of a Confident, in his Schemes of Government: But here the old Expedient of Delay, would ſtand him in no longer ſtead; *Wilks* muſt inſtantly be comply'd with, or *Powel* come again into Power! In a Word, he was puſh'd ſo home, that he was reduc'd even to take my Opinion into his Aſſiſtance: For he knew I was a Rival to neither of them; perhaps too, he had fancy'd, that from the Succeſs of my firſt Play, I might know as much of the Stage, and what made an Actor valuable, as either of them: He ſaw too, that tho' they had each of them five good Parts to my one; yet the Applauſe which in my few, I had met with, was given me by better Judges, than, as yet, had approv'd of the beſt They had done. They generally meaſured the goodneſs of a Part, by the Quantity, or Length of it: I thought none bad for being ſhort, that were cloſely-natural; nor any the better, for being long, without that valuable Quality. But, in this, I doubt, as to their Intereſt, they judg'd better, than my ſelf; for I have generally obſerv'd, that thoſe, who do a great deal not ill, have been preferr'd to thoſe, who do but little, though never ſo maſterly. And therefore I allow, that while there were ſo few good Parts, and as few good Judges of them, it ought to have been no Wonder to me, that, as an Actor, I was leſs valued, by the Maſter, or the common People, than ei-

ther of them: All the Advantage I had of them, was, that by not being troubleſome, I had more of our Maſter's perſonal Inclination, than any Actor of the male Sex; and ſo much of it, that I was almoſt the only one, whom at that time, he us'd to take into his Parties of Pleaſure; very often *tete à tete*, and ſometimes, in a *Partie quarrèe*. Theſe then were the Qualifications, however good, or bad, to which may be imputed our Maſter's having made Choice of me, to aſſiſt him, in the Difficulty, under which he now labour'd. He was himſelf ſometimes inclin'd to ſet up *Powel* again, as a Check upon the over-bearing Temper of *Wilks:* Tho' to ſay Truth, he lik'd neither of them; but was ſtill under a Neceſſity, that one of them ſhould preſide; tho' he ſcarce knew which of the two Evils to chuſe. This Queſtion, when I happen'd to be alone with him, was often debated in our Evening Converſation; nor indeed, did I find it an eaſy matter to know which Party I ought to recommend to his Election. I knew they were neither of them Well-wiſhers to me, as in common they were Enemies to moſt Actors, in proportion to the Merit, that ſeem'd to be riſing, in them. But as I had the Proſperity of the Stage more at Heart, than any other Conſideration, I could not be long undetermin'd, in my Opinion, and therefore gave it to our Maſter, at once, in Favour of *Wilks*. I, with all the Force I could muſter, inſiſted, " That if *Powel* were pre-
" ferr'd, the ill Example of his Negligence, and abandon'd Cha-
" racter (whatever his Merit on the Stage might be) would re-
" duce our Company to Contempt, and Beggary; obſerving at
" the ſame time, in how much better Order our Affairs went
" forward, ſince *Wilks* came among us, of which I recounted
" ſeveral Inſtances, that are not ſo neceſſary to tire my Reader
" with. All this, though he allow'd to be true; yet *Powel*, he
" ſaid, was a better Actor than *Wilks*, when he minded his Bu-
" ſineſs (that is to ſay, when he was, what he ſeldom was, ſober)
" But *Powel*, it ſeems, had a ſtill greater Merit to him, which
" was, (as he obſerv'd) that when Affairs were in his Hands, he

" had

" had kept the Actors quiet, without one Day's Pay, for ſix " Weeks together, and it was not every body could do that; " for you ſee, ſaid he, *Wilks* will never be eaſy, unleſs I give " him his whole Pay, when others have it not, and what an " Injuſtice would that be to the reſt, if I were to comply with " him? How do I know, but then they may be all, in a Mu- " tiny, and *mayhap* (that was his Expreſſion) with *Powel* at the " Head of 'em?" By this Specimen of our Debate, it may be judg'd, under how particular, and merry a Government, the Theatre then labour'd. To conclude, this Matter ended in a Reſolution, to ſign a new Agreement, with *Wilks*, which entitled him, to his full Pay of four Pounds a Week, without any conditional Deductions. How far ſoever my Advice might have contributed to our Maſter's ſettling his Affairs upon this Foot, I never durſt make the leaſt Merit of it to *Wilks*, well knowing that his great Heart would have taken it as a mortal Affront, had I (tho' never ſo diſtantly) hinted, that his Demands had needed any Aſſiſtance, but the Juſtice of them. From this Time, then, *Wilks* became firſt Miniſter, or Buſtle-maſter-general of the Company. He, now, ſeem'd to take new Delight, in keeping the Actors cloſe to their Buſineſs; and got every Play reviv'd with Care, in which he had acted the chief Part, in *Dublin*: 'Tis true, this might be done with a particular View of ſetting off himſelf to advantage; but if, at the ſame time, it ſerv'd the Company, he ought not to want our Commendation: Now, tho' my own Conduct, neither had the Appearance of his Merit, nor the Reward that follow'd his Induſtry; I cannot help obſerving, that it ſhew'd me, to the beſt of my Power, a more cordial Common-wealth's Man: His firſt Views, in ſerving himſelf, made his Service to the whole but an incidental Merit; whereas, by my proſecuting the Means, to make him eaſy, in his Pay, unknown to him, or without asking any Favour for myſelf, at the ſame time, I gave a more unqueſtionable Proof of my preferring the Publick, to my private Intereſt: From the

ſame Principle I never murmur'd at whatever little Parts fell to my Share, and tho' I knew it would not recommend me to the Favour of the common People, I often ſubmitted to play wicked Characters, rather than they ſhould be worſe done by weaker Actors than my ſelf: But perhaps, in all this Patience under my Situation, I ſupported my Spirits, by a conſcious Vanity: For I fancy'd I had more Reaſon to value my ſelf, upon being ſometimes the Confident, and Companion of our Maſter, than *Wilks* had, in all the more publick Favours he had extorted from him. I imagin'd too, there was ſometimes as much Skill to be ſhewn, in a ſhort Part, as in the moſt voluminous, which he generally made choice of; that even the coxcombly Follies of a Sir *John Daw*, might as well diſtinguiſh the Capacity of an Actor, as all the dry Enterprizes, and buſy Conduct of a *Truewit*. Nor could I have any Reaſon to repine at the Superiority he enjoy'd, when I conſider'd at how dear a Rate it was purchas'd, at the continual Expence of a reſtleſs Jealouſy, and fretful Impatience---- Theſe were the Paſſions, that, in the height of his Succeſſes, kept him lean to his laſt Hour, while what I wanted in Rank, or Glory, was amply made up to me, in Eaſe and Chearfulneſs. But let not this Obſervation either leſſen his Merit, or lift up my own; ſince our different Tempers were not, in our Choice, but equally natural, to both of us. To be employ'd on the Stage was the Delight of his Life; to be juſtly excus'd from it, was the Joy of mine: I lov'd Eaſe, and he Pre-eminence: In that, he might be more commendable. Tho' he often diſturb'd me, he ſeldom could do it, without more diſordering himſelf: In our Diſputes, his Warmth could leſs bear Truth, than I could ſupport manifeſt Injuries: He would hazard our Undoing, to gratify his Paſſions, tho' otherwiſe an honeſt Man; and I rather choſe to give up my Reaſon, or not ſee my Wrong, than ruin our Community by an equal Raſhneſs. By this oppoſite Conduct, our Accounts at the End of our Labours, ſtood thus: While he liv'd, he was the elder Man, when he dy'd, he was

not

not ſo old as I am: He never left the Stage, till he left the World: I never ſo well enjoy'd the World, as when I left the Stage: He dy'd in Poſſeſſion of his Wiſhes; and I, by having had a leſs cholerick Ambition, am ſtill taſting mine, in Health, and Liberty. But, as he in a great meaſure wore out the Organs of Life, in his inceſſant Labours, to gratify the Publick, the many whom he gave Pleaſure to, will always owe his Memory a favourable Report--- Some Facts, that will vouch for the Truth of this Account, will be found in the Sequel of theſe Memoirs. If I have ſpoke with more Freedom of his quondam Competitor *Powel*, let my good Intentions to future Actors, in ſhewing what will ſo much concern them to avoid, be my Excuſe for it: For though *Powel* had from Nature, much more than *Wilks*; in Voice, and Ear, in Elocution, in Tragedy, and Humour in Comedy, greatly the Advantage of him; yet, as I have obſerv'd, from the Neglect, and Abuſe of thoſe valuable Gifts, he ſuffer'd *Wilks*, to be of thrice the Service to our Society. Let me give another Inſtance of the Reward, and Favour, which in a Theatre, Diligence, and Sobriety ſeldom fail of: *Mills* the elder grew into the Friendſhip of *Wilks*, with not a great deal more, than thoſe uſeful Qualities to recommend him: He was an honeſt, quiet, careful Man, of as few Faults, as Excellencies, and *Wilks* rather choſe him for his ſecond, in many Plays, than an Actor of perhaps greater Skill, that was not ſo laborioufly diligent. And from this conſtant Aſſiduity, *Mills* with making to himſelf a Friend in *Wilks*, was advanc'd to a larger Sallary, than any Man-Actor had enjoy'd, during my time, on the Stage. I have yet to offer a more happy Recommendation of Temperance, which a late celebrated Actor was warn'd into, by the miſ-conduct of *Powel*. About the Year, that *Wilks* return'd from *Dublin*, *Booth*, who had commenc'd Actor, upon that Theatre, came over to the Company, in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*: He was, then, but an Under-graduate of the Buskin, and as he told me himſelf, had been for ſome time too

frank

frank a Lover of the Bottle; but having had the Happineſs to obſerve, into what Contempt, and Diſtreſſes *Powel* had plung'd himſelf by the ſame Vice, he was ſo ſtruck with the Terror of his Example, that he fix'd a Reſolution (which from that time, to the end of his Days, he ſtrictly obſerv'd) of utterly reforming it; an uncommon Act of Philoſophy in a young Man! of which in his Fame, and Fortune, he afterwards enjoy'd the Reward and Benefit. Theſe Obſervations I have not meerly thrown together as a Moraliſt, but to prove, that the briskeſt looſe Liver, or intemperate Man (though Morality were out of the Queſtion) can never arrive at the neceſſary Excellencies of a good, or uſeful Actor.

CHAP. VIII.

The Patentee of Drury-Lane *wiſer than his Actors. His particular Management. The Author continues to write Plays. Why. The beſt dramatick Poets cenſur'd, by* J. Collier, *in his* Short View of the Stage. *It has a good Effect. The Maſter of the Revels, from that time, cautious, in his licenſing new Plays. A Complaint againſt him. His Authority founded upon Cuſtom only. The late Law for fixing that Authority, in a proper Perſon, conſider'd.*

THOUGH the Maſter of our Theatre had no Conception himſelf of Theatrical Merit, either in Authors, or Actors; yet his Judgment was govern'd by a ſaving Rule, in both: He look'd into his Receipts for the Value of a Play, and from common Fame he judg'd of his Actors. But by whatever Rule he was govern'd, while he had prudently reſerv'd to himſelf a Power of not paying them more than their Merit could get, he could not be much deceiv'd by their being over, or under-valued. In a Word,

Word, he had, with great Skill, inverted the Conſtitution of the Stage, and quite chang'd the Channel of Profits ariſing from it: Formerly (when there was but one Company) the Proprietors punctually paid the Actors, their appointed Sallaries, and took to themſelves only the clear Profits: But our wiſer Proprietor, took firſt out of every Day's Receipts, Two Shillings in the Pound to himſelf; and left their Sallaries to be paid, only, as the leſs, or greater Deficiencies of Acting (according to his own Accounts) would permit. What ſeem'd moſt extraordinary in theſe Meaſures, was, that at the ſame time, he had perſuaded us to be contented with our Condition, upon his aſſuring us, That as faſt as Mony would come in, we ſhould all be paid our Arrears: And, that we might not have it always in our Power to ſay he had never intended to keep his Word; I remember, in a few Years after this Time, he once paid us Nine Days, in one Week: This happen'd, when the *Funeral*, or *Grief Alamode* was firſt acted, with more than expected Succeſs. Whether this well-tim'd Bounty was only allow'd us, to ſave Appearances, I will not ſay; but if that was his real Motive for it, it was too coſtly a Frolick to be repeated, and was at leaſt, the only Grimace of its Kind he vouchſafed us; we never having received one Day more of thoſe Arrears in above Fifteen Years Service.

While the Actors were in this Condition, I think I may very well be excus'd, in my preſuming to write Plays; which I was forc'd to do, for the Support of my increaſing Family, my precarious Income, as an Actor, being then too ſcanty, to ſupply it, with even the Neceſſaries of Life.

It may be obſervable too, that my Muſe, and my Spouſe, were equally prolifick; that the one was ſeldom the Mother of a Child, but, in the ſame Year, the other made me the Father of a Play: I think we had about a Dozen of each ſort between us; of both which Kinds, ſome dy'd in their Infancy, and near an equal number of each were alive, when I quitted the Theatre. But it is no wonder, when a Muſe is only call'd upon, by Family-Duty,

ſhe ſhould not always rejoice, in the Fruit of her Labour. To this Neceſſity of Writing, then, I attribute the Defects of my ſecond Play, which coming out too haſtily, the Year after my firſt, turn'd to very little Account. But having got as much, by my Firſt, as I ought to have expected, from the Succeſs of them Both, I had no great Reaſon to complain: Not but, I confeſs, ſo bad was my Second, that I do not chuſe to tell you the Name of it; and, that it might be peaceably forgotten, I have not given it a Place, in the Two Volumes of thoſe I publiſh'd in *Quarto*, in the Year 1721. And whenever I took upon me, to make ſome dormant Play of an old Author, to the beſt of my Judgment, fitter for the Stage, it was, honeſtly, not to be idle, that ſet me to work; as a good Houſewife will mend old Linnen, when ſhe has not better Employment. But when I was more warmly engag'd, by a Subject entirely new, I only thought it a good Subject, when it ſeem'd worthy of an abler Pen, than my own, and might prove as uſeful to the Hearer, as profitable, to myſelf: Therefore, whatever any of my Productions, might want of Skill, Learning, Wit, or Humour; or however unqualify'd I might be, to inſtruct others, who ſo ill govern'd my ſelf: Yet ſuch Plays (entirely my own) were not wanting, at leaſt, in what our moſt admired Writers ſeem'd to neglect, and without which, I cannot allow the moſt taking Play, to be intrinſically Good, or to be a Work, upon which a Man of Senſe and Probity ſhould value himſelf: I mean, when they do not, as well *prodeſſe*, as *delectare*, give Profit, with Delight. The *Utile dulci* was, of old, equally the Point; and has always been my Aim, however wide of the Mark, I may have ſhot my Arrow. It has often given me Amazement, that our beſt Authors of that Time, could think the Wit, and Spirit of their Scenes, could be an Excuſe for making the Looſeneſs of them publick. The many Inſtances of their Talents ſo abus'd, are too glaring, to need a cloſer Comment, and are ſometimes too groſs to be recited. If then, to have avoided this Imputation, or rather to have had the Intereſt,

and

and Honour of Virtue, always in view, can give Merit, to a Play; I am contented, that my Readers ſhould think ſuch Merit, the All, that mine have to boaſt of. Libertines, of mere Wit, and Pleaſure, may laugh at theſe grave Laws, that would limit a lively Genius; but every ſenſible honeſt Man, conſcious of their Truth, and Uſe, will give theſe Ralliers Smile for Smile, and ſhew a due Contempt, for their Merriment.

But while our Authors took theſe extraordinary Liberties with their Wit, I remember, the Ladies were then obſerv'd, to be decently afraid of venturing bare-fac'd to a new Comedy, 'till they had been aſſur'd they might do it, without the Riſque of an Inſult, to their Modeſty; or, if their Curioſity were too ſtrong, for their Patience, they took care, at leaſt, to ſave Appearances, and rarely came upon the firſt Days of Acting, but in Masks (then daily worn, and admitted, in the Pit, the Side-Boxes, and Gallery) which Cuſtom, however, had ſo many ill Conſequences attending it, that it has been aboliſh'd theſe many Years.

Theſe Immoralities of the Stage, had, by an avow'd Indulgence, been creeping into it, ever ſince King *Charles* his Time: Nothing that was looſe, could then be too low for it: The *London Cuckolds*, the moſt rank Play that ever ſucceeded, was then in the higheſt Court-Favour. In this almoſt general Corruption, *Dryden*, whoſe Plays were more fam'd for their Wit, than their Chaſtity, led the way, which he fairly confeſſes, and endeavours to excuſe in his Epilogue to the *Pilgrim*, reviv'd in 1700, for his Benefit, in his declining Age, and Fortune. The following Lines of it, will make good my Obſervation.

Perhaps the Parſon ſtretch'd a Point too far,
When, with our Theatres, he wag'd a War.
He tells you, that this very moral Age
Receiv'd the firſt Infection from the Stage.
But ſure, a baniſh'd Court, with Lewdneſs fraught,
The Seeds of open Vice returning brought.

Thus lodg'd (as Vice by great Example thrives)
It firſt debauch'd the Daughters, and the Wives.
London, *a fruitful Soil, yet never bore*
So plentiful a Crop of Horns before.
The Poets, who muſt live by Courts, or ſtarve,
Were proud, ſo good a Government to ſerve;
And mixing with Buffoons, and Pimps profane,
Tainted the Stage, for ſome ſmall Snip of Gain:
For they, like Harlots under Bawds profeſt,
Took all th' ungodly Pains, and got the leaſt.
Thus did the thriving Malady prevail,
The Court, it's Head, the Poets but the Tail.
The Sin was of our Native Growth, 'tis true,
The Scandal of the Sin was wholly new.
Miſſes there were but modeſtly conceal'd;
Whitehall *the naked* Venus *firſt reveal'd.*
Where ſtanding, as at Cyprus, *in her Shrine,*
The Strumpet was ador'd with Rites Divine, &c.

This Epilogue, and the Prologue, to the ſame Play, written by *Dryden*, I ſpoke myſelf, which not being uſually done by the ſame Perſon, I have a mind, while I think of it, to let you know on what Occaſion they both fell to my Share, and how other Actors were affected by it.

Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who had given ſome light Touches of his Pen to the *Pilgrim*, to aſſiſt the Benefit-Day of *Dryden*, had the Diſpoſal of the Parts; and I being then, as an Actor, in ſome Favour with him, he read the Play firſt, with me alone, and was pleas'd to offer me my choice of what I might like beſt for myſelf, in it. But as the chief Characters were not (according to my Taſte) the moſt ſhining, it was no great Self-denial in me, that I deſired, he would firſt take care of thoſe, who were more difficult to be pleas'd; I therefore only choſe, for my ſelf, two ſhort incidental Parts, that of the *Stuttering Cook*, and the

Mad

Mad Engliſhman; in which homely Characters, I ſaw more Matter for Delight, than thoſe that might have a better Pretence to the Amiable: And when the Play came to be acted, I was not deceiv'd, in my Choice. Sir *John*, upon my being contented with ſo little a Share in the Entertainment, gave me the Epilogue to make up my Meſs, which being written ſo much above the Strain of common Authors, I confeſs, I was not a little pleas'd with. And *Dryden*, upon his hearing me repeat it, to him, made me a further Compliment of truſting me with the Prologue. This ſo particular Diſtinction, was look'd upon, by the Actors, as ſomething too extraordinary. But no one was ſo impatiently ruffled at it, as *Wilks*, who ſeldom choſe ſoft Words, when he ſpoke of any thing he did not like. The moſt gentle thing he ſaid of it was, That he did not underſtand ſuch Treatment; that, for his part, he look'd upon it, as an Affront to all the reſt of the Company, that there ſhould be but One, out of the Whole, judg'd fit to ſpeak either a Prologue, or an Epilogue. To quiet him, I offer'd to decline either in his Favour, or both, if it were equally eaſy to the Author: But he was too much concern'd, to accept of an Offer, that had been made to another, in preference to himſelf; and which he ſeem'd to think his beſt way of reſenting, was to contemn. But from that time, however, he was reſolv'd, to the beſt of his Power, never to let the firſt Offer of a Prologue eſcape him: Which little Ambition, ſometimes, made him pay too dear, for his Succeſs; the Flatneſs of the many miſerable Prologues, that by this means fell to his Lot, ſeem'd wofully unequal, to the few good ones, he might have reaſon to triumph in.

I have given you this Fact, only as a Sample of thoſe frequent Rubs, and Impediments I met with, when any Step was made to my being diſtinguiſh'd as an Actor; and from this Incident too, you may partly ſee what occaſion'd ſo many Prologues, after the Death of *Betterton*, to fall into the Hands of one Speaker: But it is not every Succeſſor, to a vacant Poſt, that brings into it,

it, the Talents equal to thoſe of a Predeceſſor. To ſpeak a good Prologue well, is, in my Opinion, one of the hardeſt Parts, and ſtrongeſt Proofs of ſound Elocution; of which, I confeſs, I never thought, that any of the ſeveral who attempted it, ſhew'd themſelves, by far, equal Maſters to *Betterton*. *Betterton*, in the Delivery of a good Prologue, had a natural Gravity, that gave Strength to good Senſe; a temper'd Spirit, that gave Life to Wit; and a dry Reſerve, in his Smile, that threw Ridicule into its brighteſt Colours; of theſe Qualities, in the ſpeaking of a Prologue, *Booth* only had the firſt, but attain'd not to the other two: *Wilks* had Spirit, but gave too looſe a Rein to it, and it was ſeldom he could ſpeak a grave and weighty Verſe, harmoniouſly: His Accents were frequently too ſharp, and violent, which ſometimes occaſion'd his eagerly cutting off half the Sound of Syllables, that ought to have been gently melted into the Melody of Metre. In Verſes of Humour too, he would ſometimes carry the Mimickry farther than the Hint would bear, even to a trifling Light, as if himſelf were pleas'd to ſee it ſo glittering. In the Truth of this Criticiſm, I have been confirm'd by thoſe, whoſe Judgment I dare more confidently rely on, than my own. *Wilks* had many Excellencies; but if we leave Prologue-ſpeaking out of the Number, he will ſtill have enough to have made him a valuable Actor. And I only make this Exception from them, to caution others from imitating, what, in his Time, they might have too implicitly admired. But I have a Word or two more to ſay concerning the Immoralities of the Stage. Our Theatrical Writers were not only accus'd of Immorality, but Prophaneneſs; many flagrant Inſtances of which were collected, and publiſh'd by a Non-juring Clergyman, *Jeremy Collier*, in his *View of the Stage*, &c. about the Year 1697. However juſt his Charge againſt the Authors, that then wrote for it, might be, I cannot but think his Sentence, againſt the Stage itſelf, is unequal; Reformation, he thinks, too mild a Treatment for it, and is therefore for laying his Ax to the Root of it. If this were to be a

Rule

Rule of Judgment, for Offences of the ſame Nature, what might become of the Pulpit, where many a ſeditious and corrupted Teacher, has been known, to cover the moſt pernicious Doctrine with the Mask of Religion? This puts me in mind of what the noted *Jo. Hains*, the Comedian, a Fellow of a wicked Wit, ſaid upon this Occaſion; who being ask'd, What could tranſport Mr. *Collier* into ſo blind a Zeal, for a general Suppreſſion of the Stage, when only ſome particular Authors had abus'd it; whereas the Stage, he could not but know, was generally allow'd, when rightly conducted, to be a delightful Method of mending our Morals? *For that Reaſon*, (reply'd *Hains:*) Collier *is, by Profeſſion, a Moral-mender himſelf, and two of Trade, you know, can never agree.*

The Authors of the *Old Batchelor*, and of the *Relapſe*, were thoſe, whom *Collier* moſt labour'd to convict of Immorality; to which they ſeverally publiſh'd their Reply. The firſt ſeem'd too much hurt, to be able to defend himſelf; and the other felt him ſo little, that his Wit only laugh'd at his Laſhes.

My firſt Play, of the *Fool in Faſhion*, too, being then in a courſe of Succeſs; perhaps for that Reaſon, only, this ſevere Author thought himſelf oblig'd to attack it; in which, I hope, he has ſhewn more Zeal, than Juſtice. His greateſt Charge againſt it is, That it ſometimes uſes the Word, *Faith!* as an Oath, in the Dialogue: But if *Faith* may as well ſignify our given Word, or Credit, as our Religious Belief, why might not his Charity have taken it, in the leſs criminal Senſe? Nevertheleſs, Mr. *Collier*'s Book, was, upon the whole, thought ſo laudable a Work, that King *William*, ſoon after it was publiſh'd, granted him a *Nolo proſequi*, when he ſtood anſwerable to the Law, for his having abſolv'd two Criminals, juſt before they were executed for High-Treaſon. And it muſt be farther granted, that his calling our Dramatick Writers to this ſtrict Account, had a very wholeſom Effect, upon thoſe, who writ after this Time. They were, now, a great deal more upon their Guard; Indecencies were no longer

Wit;

Wit; and, by degrees, the Fair Sex came again to fill the Boxes, on the firſt Day of a new Comedy, without Fear or Cenſure. But the Maſter of the Revels, who then, licens'd all Plays, for the Stage, aſſiſted this Reformation, with a more zealous Severity, than ever. He would ſtrike out whole Scenes of a vicious, or immoral Character, tho' it were viſibly ſhewn to be reform'd, or puniſh'd. A ſevere Inſtance of this Kind falling upon my ſelf, may be an Excuſe for my relating it. When *Richard the Third* (as I alter'd it from *Shakeſpear*) came from his Hands, to the Stage, he expung'd the whole Firſt Act, without ſparing a Line of it. This extraordinary Stroke of a *Sic volo*, occaſioned my applying to him, for the ſmall Indulgence of a Speech, or two, that the other four Acts might limp on, with a little leſs Abſurdity. No, he had not Leiſure to conſider what might be ſeparately inoffenſive. He had an Objection to the whole Act, and the Reaſon he gave for it was, that the Diſtreſſes of King *Henry the Sixth*, who is kill'd by *Richard* in the firſt Act, would put weak People too much in mind of King *James*, then living in *France*; a notable Proof of his Zeal for the Government! Thoſe who have read, either the Play, or the Hiſtory, I dare ſay, will think he ſtrain'd hard for the Parallel. In a word, we were forc'd, for ſome few Years, to let the Play take its Fate, with only four Acts divided into five; by the Loſs of ſo conſiderable a Limb, may one not modeſtly ſuppoſe, it was robb'd of, at leaſt, a fifth part of that Favour, it afterwards met with? For tho' this firſt Act was at laſt recovered, and made the Play whole agen; yet the Relief came too late, to repay me for the Pains I had taken in it. Nor did I ever hear that this zealous Severity of the Maſter of the Revels, was afterwards thought juſtifiable. But my Good-fortune, in proceſs of Time, gave me an Opportunity to talk with my Oppreſſor, in my Turn.

The Patent granted by his late Majeſty, King *George* I. to Sir *Richard Steele*, and his Aſſigns, of which I was one, made us ſole Judges of what Plays might be proper for the Stage, without

without ſubmitting them, to the Approbation, or Licenſe of any other particular Perſon. Notwithſtanding which, the Maſter of the Revels demanded his Fee of Forty Shillings, upon our acting a new One, tho' we had ſpar'd him the Trouble of peruſing it. This occaſion'd my being deputed to him, to enquire into the Right of his Demand, and to make an amicable End of our Diſpute. I confeſs, I did not diſlike the Office; and told him, according to my Inſtructions, That I came not to defend, even our own Right, in prejudice to his; that if our Patent, had inadvertently ſuperſeded the Grant of any former Power, or Warrant, whereon he might ground his Pretenſions, we would not inſiſt upon our Broad Seal, but would readily anſwer his Demands upon ſight of ſuch his Warrant, any thing in our Patent to the contrary notwithſtanding. This I had reaſon to think he could not do; and, when I found he made no direct Reply to my Queſtion, I repeated it with greater Civilities, and offers of Compliance, 'till I was forc'd in the end to conclude, with telling him, That as his Pretenſions were not back'd with any viſible Inſtrument of Right, and as his ſtrongeſt Plea was Cuſtom, we could not ſo far extend our Complaiſance, as to continue his Fees upon ſo ſlender a Claim to them: And from that Time, neither our Plays, or his Fees, gave either of us any farther trouble. In this Negotiation, I am the bolder to think Juſtice was on our Side, becauſe the Law lately paſs'd, by which the Power of Licenſing Plays, *&c.* is given to a proper Perſon, is a ſtrong Preſumption, that no Law had ever given that Power to any ſuch Perſon before.

My having mentioned this Law, which ſo immediately affected the Stage, inclines me to throw out a few Obſervations upon it: But I muſt firſt lead you gradually thro' the Facts, and natural Cauſes, that made ſuch a Law neceſſary.

Although it had been taken for granted, from Time immemorial, that no Company of Comedians, could act Plays, *&c.* without the Royal Licenſe, or Protection of ſome legal Authority; a Theatre was, notwithſtanding, erected in *Goodman's-Fields*,

about ſeven Years ago, where Plays, without any ſuch Licenſe, were acted for ſome time, unmoleſted, and with Impunity. After a Year or two, this Playhouſe was thought a Nuſance too near the City: Upon which the Lord-Mayor, and Aldermen, petition'd the Crown to ſuppreſs it: What Steps were taken, in favour of that Petition, I know not, but common Fame ſeem'd to allow from what had, or had not been done in it, that acting Plays in the ſaid Theatre was not evidently unlawful. However, this Queſtion of Acting without a Licenſe, a little time after, came to a nearer Deciſion in *Weſtminſter-Hall*; the Occaſion of bringing it thither was this: It happened that the Purchaſers of the Patent, to whom Mr. *Booth* and Myſelf had ſold our Shares, were at variance with the Comedians, that were then left to their Government, and the Variance ended, in the chief of thoſe Comedians deſerting, and ſetting up for themſelves in the little Houſe in the *Hay-Market*, in 1733, by which Deſertion the Patentees were very much diſtreſſed, and conſiderable Loſers. Their Affairs being in this deſperate Condition, they were advis'd, to put the Act of the Twelfth of Queen *Anne*, againſt Vagabonds, in force, againſt theſe Deſerters, then acting in the *Hay-Market* without Licenſe. Accordingly, one of their chief Performers was taken from the Stage, by a Juſtice of Peace his Warrant, and committed to *Bridewell* as one within the Penalty of the ſaid Act. When the Legality of this Commitment was diſputed in *Weſtminſter-Hall*, by all I could obſerve, from the learned Pleadings on both Sides (for I had the Curioſity to hear them) it did not appear to me, that the Comedian, ſo committed, was within the Deſcription of the ſaid Act, he being a Houſe-keeper, and having a Vote for the *Weſtminſter* Members of Parliament. He was diſcharged accordingly, and conducted through the Hall, with the Congratulations of the Crowds that attended, and wiſh'd well to his Cauſe.

The Iſſue of this Trial threw me, at that time, into a very odd Reflexion, *viz.* That if acting Plays, without Licenſe, did not

not make the Performers Vagabonds, unleſs they wandered from their Habitations ſo to do, how particular was the Caſe of Us three late Menaging Actors, at the *Theatre-Royal*, who in twenty Years before had paid, upon an Averidge, at leaſt Twenty Thouſand Pounds, to be protected (as Actors) from a Law, that has not ſince appeared to be againſt us. Now, whether we might certainly have acted without any Licenſe at all, I ſhall not pretend to determine; but this I have, of my own Knowledge, to ſay, That in Queen *Anne*'s Reign, the Stage was in ſuch Confuſion, and its Affairs in ſuch Diſtreſs, that Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*, after they had held it about one Year, threw up the Menagement of it, as an unprofitable Poſt, after which, a Licenſe for Acting was not thought worth any Gentleman's asking for, and almoſt ſeem'd to go a begging, till ſome time after, by the Care, Application, and Induſtry of three Actors, it became ſo proſperous, and the Profits ſo conſiderable, that it created a new Place, and a *Sine-cure* of a Thouſand Pounds a Year, which the Labour of thoſe Actors conſtantly paid, to ſuch Perſons as had from time to time, Merit or Intereſt enough, to get their Names inſerted as Fourth Menagers in a Licenſe with them, for acting Plays, *&c.* a Preferment, that many a Sir *Francis Wrong-head* would have jump'd at. But to go on with my Story. This Endeavour of the Patentees, to ſuppreſs the Comedians acting in the *Hay-Market*, proving ineffectual, and no Hopes of a Reunion then appearing, the Remains of the Company left in *Drury-Lane*, were reduced to a very Low Condition. At this time a third Purchaſer, *Charles Fleetwood*, Eſq; ſtept in; who judging the beſt Time to buy was, when the Stock was at the loweſt Price, ſtruck up a Bargain at once, for Five Parts in Six of the Patent; and, at the ſame time, gave the revolted Comedians their own Terms to return, and come under his Government in *Drury-Lane*, where they now continue to act, at very ample Sallaries, as I am informed, in 1738. But (as I have obſerv'd) the late Cauſe of the proſecuted Comedian having gone ſo ſtrongly in

his Favour, and the Houſe in *Goodman's-Fields* too, continuing to act with as little Authority, unmoleſted; theſe ſo tollerated Companies gave Encouragement to a broken Wit, to collect a fourth Company, who, for ſome time acted Plays in the *Hay-Market*, which Houſe the united *Drury-Lane* Comedians had lately quitted: This enterpriſing Perſon, I ſay (whom I do not chuſe to name, unleſs it could be to his Advantage, or that it were of Importance) had Senſe enough to know, that the beſt Plays, with bad Actors, would turn but to a very poor Account; and therefore found it neceſſary to give the Publick ſome Pieces of an extraordinary Kind, the Poetry of which he conceiv'd ought to be ſo ſtrong, that the greateſt Dunce of an Actor could not ſpoil it: He knew too, that as he was in haſte to get Mony, it would take up leſs Time to be intrepidly abuſive, than decently entertaining; that, to draw the Mob after him, he muſt rake the Channel, and pelt their Superiors; that, to ſhew himſelf ſomebody, he muſt come up to *Juvenal*'s Advice, and ſtand the Conſequence:

Aude aliquid brevibus Gyaris, et carcere dignum
Si vis eſſe aliquis ---- Juv. Sat. I.

Such then, was the mettleſome Modeſty he ſet out with; upon this Principle he produc'd ſeveral frank, and free Farces, that ſeem'd to knock all Diſtinctions of Mankind on the Head: Religion, Laws, Government, Prieſts, Judges, and Miniſters, were all laid flat, at the Feet of this *Herculean* Satyriſt! This *Drawcanſir* in Wit, that ſpared neither Friend nor Foe! who, to make his Poetical Fame immortal, like another *Eroſtratus*, ſet Fire to his Stage, by writing up to an Act of Parliament to demoliſh it. I ſhall not give the particular Strokes of his Ingenuity a Chance to be remembred, by reciting them; it may be enough to ſay, in general Terms, they were ſo openly flagrant, that the Wiſdom of the Legiſlature thought it high time, to take a proper Notice of them.

Having

Having now ſhewn, by what means there came to be four Theatres, beſides a fifth for Operas, in *London*, all open at the ſame time, and that while they were ſo numerous, it was evident ſome of them muſt have ſtarv'd, unleſs they fed upon the Traſh and Filth of Buffoonery, and Licentiouſneſs; I now come, as I promis'd, to ſpeak of that neceſſary Law, which has reduced their Number, and prevents the Repetition of ſuch Abuſes, in thoſe that remain open, for the Publick Recreation.

While this Law was in Debate, a lively Spirit, and uncommon Eloquence was employ'd againſt it. It was urg'd, That *one* of the greateſt Goods we can enjoy, is *Liberty*. (This we may grant to be an inconteſtable Truth, without its being the leaſt Objection to this Law.) It was ſaid too, That to bring the Stage under the Reſtraint of a Licenſer, was leading the way to an Attack, upon the Liberty of the Preſs. This amounts but to a Jealouſy at beſt, which I hope, and believe all honeſt *Engliſhmen* have as much Reaſon to think a groundleſs, as to fear, it is a juſt Jealouſy: For the Stage, and the Preſs, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, are very different Weapons to wound with. If a great Man could be no more injured, by being perſonally ridicul'd, or made contemptible, in a Play, than by the ſame Matter only printed, and read againſt him, in a Pamphlet, or the ſtrongeſt Verſe; then indeed the Stage, and the Preſs might pretend, to be upon an equal Foot of Liberty: But when the wide Difference between theſe two Liberties comes to be explain'd, and conſider'd, I dare ſay we ſhall find the Injuries from one, capable of being ten times more ſevere, and formidable, than from the other: Let us ſee, at leaſt, if the Caſe will not be vaſtly alter'd. Read what Mr. *Collier*, in his *Defence* of his *Short View of the Stage*, &c. Page 25, ſays to this Point; he ſets this Difference, in a clear Light. Theſe are his Words:

" The Satyr of a Comedian, and another Poet have a different " effect upon Reputation: A Character of Diſadvantage, upon " the Stage, makes a ſtronger Impreſſion, than elſewhere: Read- " ing is but Hearing at ſecond-hand; now Hearing, at beſt, is " a more languid Conveyance, than Sight. For as *Horace* ob- " ſerves,

Segnius irritant animum, demiſſa per aurem,
Quam quæ ſunt oculis ſubjecta fidelibus.

" The Eye is much more affecting, and ſtrikes deeper into the " Memory, than the Ear: Beſides, upon the Stage, both the " Senſes are in Conjunction. The Life of the Actor fortifies the " Object, and awakens the Mind to take hold of it--- Thus a " dramatic Abuſe is rivetted, in the Audience; a Jeſt is im- " prov'd into Argument, and Rallying grows up into Reaſon: " Thus a Character of Scandal becomes almoſt indelible; a Man " goes for a Blockhead, upon *Content*, and he that is made a " Fool in a Play, is often made one for his Life. 'Tis true, he " paſſes for ſuch only among the prejudic'd, and unthinking; " but theſe are no inconſiderable Diviſion of Mankind. For theſe " Reaſons, I humbly conceive, the Stage ſtands in need of a great " deal of Diſcipline, and Reſtraint: To give them an unlimited " Range, is in effect to make them Maſters of all moral Di- " ſtinctions, and to lay Honour and Religion, at their Mercy. " To ſhew Greatneſs ridiculous, is the way to loſe the Uſe, and " abate the Value of the Quality. Things made little in jeſt, " will ſoon be ſo in earneſt; for Laughing, and Eſteem, are ſel- " dom beſtow'd on the ſame Object."

If this was Truth, and Reaſon (as ſure it was) forty Years ago; will it not carry the ſame Conviction with it to theſe Days, when there came to be a much ſtronger Call for a Reformation of the Stage, than when this Author wrote againſt it, or perhaps than was ever known, ſince the *Engliſh* Stage had a Being? And now let us ask another Queſtion! Does not the general Opinion

of

of Mankind ſuppoſe, that the Honour, and Reputation of a Miniſter is, or ought to be, as dear to him, as his Life? Yet when the Law, in Queen *Anne*'s Time, had made even an unſucceſsful Attempt upon the Life of a Miniſter, capital, could any Reaſon be found, that the Fame, and Honour of his Character ſhould not be under equal Protection? Was the Wound that *Guiſcard* gave to the late Lord *Oxford*, when a Miniſter, a greater Injury, than the Theatrical Inſult which was offer'd to a later Miniſter, in a more valuable Part, his Character? Was it not as high time, then, to take this dangerous Weapon of mimical Inſolence, and Defamation out of the Hands of a mad Poet, as to wreſt the Knife from the lifted Hand of a Murderer? And is not that Law of a milder Nature, which *prevents* a Crime, than that which *puniſhes* it, after it is committed? May not one think it amazing, that the Liberty of defaming lawful Power and Dignity, ſhould have been ſo eloquently contended for? or eſpecially that this Liberty ought to triumph in a Theatre, where the moſt able, the moſt innocent, and moſt upright Perſon, muſt himſelf be, while the Wound is given, defenceleſs? How long muſt a Man ſo injur'd, lie bleeding, before the Pain and Anguiſh of his Fame (if it ſuffers wrongfully) can be diſpell'd? or ſay, he had deſerv'd Reproof, and publick Accuſation, yet the Weight and Greatneſs of his Office, never can deſerve it from a publick Stage, where the loweſt Malice by ſawcy Parallels, and abuſive Inuendoes, may do every thing but name him: But alas! Liberty is ſo tender, ſo chaſte a Virgin, that, it ſeems, not ſuffer her to do irreparable Injuries, with Impunity, is a Violation of her! It cannot ſure be a principle of Liberty, that would turn the Stage into a Court of Enquiry, that would let the partial Applauſes of a vulgar Audience give Sentence upon the Conduct of Authority, and put Impeachments into the Mouth of a *Harlequin?* Will not every impartial Man think, that Malice, Envy, Faction, or Miſ-rule, might have too much Advantage over lawful Power, if the Range of ſuch a Stage-liberty were unlimited,

ed, and inſiſted on to be enroll'd among the glorious Rights of an *Engliſh* Subject?

I remember much ſuch another ancient Liberty, which many of the good People of *England* were once extreamly fond of; I mean that of throwing Squibs, and Crackers, at all Spectators without diſtinction, upon a Lord-Mayor's Day; but about forty Years ago a certain Nobleman happening to have one of his Eyes burnt out by this miſchievous Merriment, it occaſion'd a penal Law, to prevent thoſe Sorts of Jeſts, from being laugh'd at for the future: Yet I have never heard, that the moſt zealous Patriot ever thought ſuch a Law was the leaſt Reſtraint upon our Liberty.

If I am ask'd, why I am ſo voluntary a Champion for the Honour of this Law, that has limited the Number of Play-Houſes, and which now can no longer concern me, as a Profeſſor of the Stage? I reply, that it being a Law, ſo nearly relating to the Theatre, it ſeems not at all foreign to my Hiſtory, to have taken notice of it; and as I have farther promis'd, to give the Publick a true Portrait of my Mind, I ought fairly to let them ſee how far I am, or am not a Blockhead, when I pretend to talk of ſerious Matters, that may be judg'd ſo far above my Capacity: Nor will it in the leaſt diſcompoſe me, whether my Obſervations are contemn'd, or applauded. A Blockhead is not always an unhappy Fellow, and if the World will not flatter us, we can flatter our ſelves; perhaps too it will be as difficult to convince us, we are in the wrong, as that you wiſer Gentlemen are one Tittle the better for your Knowledge. It is yet a Queſtion, with me, whether we weak Heads have not as much Pleaſure too, in giving our ſhallow Reaſon a little Exerciſe, as thoſe clearer Brains have, that are allow'd to dive into the deepeſt Doubts and Myſteries; to reflect, or form a Judgment upon remarkable things *paſt*, is as delightful to me, as it is to the graveſt Politician to penetrate into what is *preſent*, or to enter, into Speculations upon what is, or is not likely to come. Why are Hiſtories

Hiſtories written, if all Men are not to judge of them? Therefore, if my Reader has no more to do, than I have, I have a Chance for his being as willing to have a little more upon the ſame Subject, as I am to give it him.

When direct Arguments againſt this Bill were found too weak, Recourſe was had to diſſuaſive ones: It was ſaid, that *this Reſtraint upon the Stage, would not remedy the Evil complain'd of: That a Play refus'd to be licens'd, would ſtill be printed, with double Advantage, when it ſhould be inſinuated, that it was refus'd, for ſome Strokes of Wit*, &c. *and would be more likely, then, to have its Effect, among the People.* However natural this Conſequence may ſeem, I doubt it will be very difficult, to give a *printed* Satyr, or Libel, half the Force, or Credit of an *acted* one. The moſt artful, or notorious Lye, or ſtrain'd Alluſion that ever ſlander'd a great Man, may be read, by ſome People, with a Smile of Contempt, or at worſt, it can impoſe but on one Perſon, at once: But when the Words of the ſame plauſible Stuff, ſhall be repeated on a Theatre, the Wit of it among a Crowd of Hearers, is liable to be over-valu'd, and may unite, and warm a whole Body of the Malicious, or Ignorant, into a Plaudit; nay, the partial Claps of only *twenty* ill-minded Perſons, among ſeveral hundreds of ſilent Hearers, ſhall, and often have been, miſtaken for a general Approbation, and frequently draw into their Party the Indifferent, or Inapprehenſive, who rather, than be thought not to underſtand the Conceit, will laugh, with the Laughers, and join in the Triumph! But alas! the *quiet* Reader of the ſame ingenious Matter, can only like for *himſelf*; and the Poiſon has a much ſlower Operation, upon the Body of a People, when it is ſo retail'd out, than when ſold to a full Audience by wholeſale. The *ſingle* Reader too may happen to be a ſenſible, or unprejudic'd Perſon; and then the merry Doſe meeting with the Antidote of a ſound Judgment, perhaps may have no Operation at all: With ſuch a one, the Wit of the moſt ingenious Satyr, will only, by its intrinſick

Truth, or Value, gain upon his Approbation; or if it be worth an Anſwer, a printed Falſhood, may poſſibly be confounded by printed Proofs againſt it. But againſt Contempt, and Scandal heighten'd, and colour'd by the Skill of an *Actor*, ludicrouſly infuſing it into a Multitude, there is no immediate Defence to be made, or equal Reparation to be had for it; for it would be but a poor Satisfaction, at laſt, after lying long patient, under the Injury, that Time only is to ſhew (which would probably be the Caſe) that the Author of it was a deſperate Indigent, that did it for Bread. How much leſs dangerous, or offenſive, then, is the *written*, than the *acted* Scandal? The Impreſſion the Comedian gives to it, is a kind of double Stamp upon the Poet's Paper, that raiſes it to ten times the intrinſick Value. Might we not ſtrengthen this Argument too, even by the Eloquence, that ſeem'd to have oppos'd this Law? I will ſay for my ſelf, at leaſt, that when I came to read the printed Arguments againſt it, I could ſcarce believe they were the ſame, that had amaz'd, and rais'd ſuch Admiration, in me, when they had the Advantage of a lively Elocution, and of that Grace and Spirit, which gave Strength and Luſtre to them, in the Delivery!

Upon the whole; if the Stage ought ever to have been reform'd; if to place a Power *ſomewhere* of reſtraining its Immoralities, was not inconſiſtent, with the Liberties of a civiliz'd People (neither of which, ſure any moral Man of Senſe can diſpute) might it not have ſhewn a Spirit too poorly prejudic'd, to have rejected ſo rational a Law, only becauſe, the Honour, and Office of a Miniſter might happen, in ſome ſmall Meaſure, to be protected by it.

But however little Weight there may be, in the Obſervations I have made upon it, I ſhall for my own Part always think them juſt; unleſs I ſhould live to ſee (which I do not expect) ſome future Set of upright Miniſters uſe their utmoſt Endeavours to repeal it.

And

And now, we have ſeen the Conſequence of what many People are apt to contend for, Variety of Play-houſes! How was it poſſible ſo many could honeſtly ſubſiſt, on what was fit to be ſeen? Their extraordinary Number, of Courſe, reduc'd them to live upon the Gratification of ſuch Hearers, as they knew would be beſt pleas'd with publick Offence; and publick Offence, of what kind ſoever, will always be a good Reaſon for making Laws, to reſtrain it.

To conclude, let us now conſider this Law, in a quite different Light; let us leave the political Part of it quite out of the Queſtion; what Advantage could either the Spectators of Plays, or the Maſters of Play-houſes have gain'd, by its having never been made? How could the ſame Stock of Plays ſupply four Theatres, which (without ſuch additional Entertainments, as a Nation of common Senſe ought to be aſham'd of) could not well ſupport two? Satiety muſt have been the natural Conſequence, of the ſame Plays being twice as often repeated, as now they need be; and Satiety puts an end to all Taſtes, that the Mind of Man can delight in. Had therefore, this Law been made ſeven Years ago, I ſhould not have parted with my Share in the Patent, under a thouſand Pounds more, than I receiv'd for it--- So that as far as I am able to judge, both the Publick, as Spectators, and the Patentees, as Undertakers, are, or might be, in a way of being better entertain'd, and more conſiderable Gainers by it.

I now return to the State of the Stage, where I left it, about the Year 1697, from whence this Purſuit of its Immoralities, has led me farther, than I firſt deſign'd to have follow'd it.

CHAP. IX.

A ſmall Apology, for writing on. The different State of the two Companies. Wilks *invited over from* Dublin. Eſtcourt, *from the ſame Stage, the Winter following. Mrs.* Oldfield's *firſt Admiſſion to the* Theatre-Royal. *Her Character. The great Theatre in the* Hay-Market *built, for* Betterton's *Company. It anſwers not their Expectation. Some Obſervations upon it. A Theatrical State Secret.*

I NOW begin to doubt, that the *Gayetè du Cœur*, in which I firſt undertook this Work, may have drawn me, into a more laborious Amuſement, than I ſhall know how to away with: For though I cannot ſay, I have yet jaded my Vanity, it is not impoſſible but, by this time, the moſt candid of my Readers may want a little Breath; eſpecially, when they conſider, that all this Load, I have heap'd upon their Patience, contains but ſeven Years of the forty three I paſs'd upon the Stage; the Hiſtory of which Period I have enjoyn'd my ſelf to tranſmit to the Judgment (or Oblivion) of Poſterity. However, even my Dulneſs will find ſomebody to do it right; if my Reader is an ill-natur'd one, he will be as much pleas'd to find me a Dunce in my old Age, as poſſibly he may have been, to prove me a brisk Blockhead, in my Youth: But if he has no Gall to gratify, and would (for his ſimple Amuſement) as well know, how the Play-houſes went on forty Years ago, as how they do now, I will honeſtly tell him the reſt of my Story, as well as I can. Leſt therefore, the frequent Digreſſions, that have broke in, upon it, may have entangled his Memory, I muſt beg leave, juſt to throw together the Heads of what I have already given him, that he may again recover the Clue of my Diſcourſe.

Let

Let him, then, remember, from the Year 1660 to 1684, the various Fortune of the (then) King's, and Duke's, two famous Companies; their being reduc'd to one united; the diſtinct Characters I have given of thirteen Actors, which in the Year 1690 were the moſt famous, then, remaining of them; the Cauſe of their being again divided in 1695, and the Conſequences of that Diviſion, 'till 1697; from whence I ſhall lead them to our Second Union in ----- Hold! let me ſee ---- ay, it was in that memorable Year, when the two Kingdoms of *England* and *Scotland* were made one. And I remember a Particular, that confirms me I am right in my Chronology; for the Play of *Hamlet* being acted ſoon after, *Eſtcourt*, who then took upon him to ſay any thing, added a fourth Line to *Shakeſpear*'s Prologue to the Play, in that Play, which originally conſiſted but of three, but *Eſtcourt* made it run thus:

For Us, and for our Tragedy,
Thus ſtooping to your Clemency,
[This being a Year of Unity,]
We beg your Hearing patiently.

This new Chronological Line coming unexpectedly upon the Audience, was receiv'd with Applauſe, tho' ſeveral grave Faces look'd a little out of Humour at it. However, by this Fact, it is plain our Theatrical Union happen'd in 1708. But to ſpeak of it, in its Place, I muſt go a little back again.

From 1697, to this Union, both Companies went on, without any memorable Change in their Affairs, unleſs it were that *Betterton*'s People (however good in their Kind) were moſt of them too far advanc'd in Years to mend; and tho' we, in *Drury-Lane*, were too young to be excellent, we were not too old to be better. But what will not Satiety depreciate? For though I muſt own, and avow, that in our higheſt Proſperity, I always thought we were greatly their Inferiors; yet, by our good Fortune of being ſeen in quite new Lights, which ſeveral new-written Plays had

had ſhewn us in, we now began to make a conſiderable Stand againſt them. One good new Play, to a riſing Company, is of inconceivable Value. In *Oroonoko* (and why may I not name another, tho' it be my own?) in *Love's laſt Shift*, and in the Sequel of it, the *Relapſe*; ſeveral of our People ſhew'd themſelves in a new Style of Acting, in which Nature had not as yet been ſeen. I cannot here forget a Misfortune that befel our Society, about this time, by the Loſs of a young Actor, *Hildebrand Horden*, who was kill'd at the Bar of the *Roſe-Tavern*, in a frivolous, raſh, accidental Quarrel; for which a late Reſident at *Venice*, Colonel *Burgeſs*, and ſeveral other Perſons of Diſtinction, took their Trials, and were acquitted. This young Man had almoſt every natural Gift, that could promiſe an excellent Actor; he had beſides, a good deal of Table-wit, and Humour, with a handſom Perſon, and was every Day riſing into publick Favour. Before he was bury'd, it was obſervable, that two or three Days together, ſeveral of the Fair Sex, well dreſs'd, came in Masks (then frequently worn) and ſome in their own Coaches, to viſit this Theatrical Heroe, in his Shrowd. He was the elder Son of Dr. *Horden*, Miniſter of *Twickenham*, in *Middleſex*. But this Misfortune was ſoon repair'd, by the Return of *Wilks*, from *Dublin* (who upon this young Man's Death, was ſent for over) and liv'd long enough among us to enjoy that Approbation, from which the other was ſo unhappily cut off. The Winter following, *Eſtcourt*, the famous Mimick, of whom I have already ſpoken, had the ſame Invitation from *Ireland*, where he had commenc'd Actor: His firſt Part here, at the *Theatre-Royal*, was the *Spaniſh Friar*, in which, tho' he had remembred every Look, and Motion of the late *Tony Leigh*, ſo far as to put the Spectator very much in mind of him; yet it was viſible through the whole, notwithſtanding his Exactneſs in the Out-lines, the true Spirit, that was to fill up the Figure, was not the ſame, but unskilfully dawb'd on, like a Child's Painting upon the Face of a *Metzo-tinto*: It was too plain to the judicious, that the Conception was not his own, but imprinted

in

in his Memory, by another, of whom he only preſented a dead Likeneſs. But theſe were Defects, not ſo obvious to common Spectators; no wonder, therefore, if by his being much ſought after, in private Companies, he met with a ſort of Indulgence, not to ſay Partiality, for what he ſometimes did upon the Stage.

In the Year 1699, Mrs. *Oldfield* was firſt taken into the Houſe, where ſhe remain'd about a Twelvemonth almoſt a Mute, and unheeded, 'till Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who firſt recommended her, gave her the Part of *Alinda*, in the *Pilgrim* revis'd. This gentle Character, happily became that want of Confidence, which is inſeparable from young Beginners, who without it, ſeldom arrive to any Excellence: Notwithſtanding, I own I was, then, ſo far deceiv'd in my Opinion of her, that I thought, ſhe had little more than her Perſon, that appear'd neceſſary to the forming a good Actreſs; for ſhe ſet out with ſo extraordinary a Diffidence, that it kept her too deſpondingly down, to a formal, plain (not to ſay) flat manner of ſpeaking. Nor could the ſilver Tone of her Voice, 'till after ſome time, incline my Ear to any Hope, in her favour. But Publick Approbation is the warm Weather of a Theatrical Plant, which will ſoon bring it forward, to whatever Perfection Nature has deſign'd it. However Mrs. *Oldfield* (perhaps for want of freſh Parts) ſeem'd to come but ſlowly forward, 'till the Year 1703. Our Company, that Summer, acted at the *Bath*, during the Reſidence of Queen *Anne* at that Place. At this time it happen'd, that Mrs. *Verbruggen*, by reaſon of her laſt Sickneſs (of which ſhe ſome few Months after, dy'd) was left in *London*; and though moſt of her Parts were, of courſe, to be diſpos'd of, yet ſo earneſt was the Female Scramble for them, that only one of them fell to the Share of Mrs. *Oldfield*, that of *Leonora*, in Sir *Courtly Nice*; a Character of good plain Senſe, but not over elegantly written. It was in this Part Mrs. *Oldfield* ſurpris'd me into an Opinion of her having all the innate Powers of a good Actreſs, though they were yet, but in the Bloom of what

they

they promis'd. Before ſhe had acted this Part, I had ſo cold an Expectation from her Abilities, that ſhe could ſcarce prevail with me, to rehearſe with her the Scenes, ſhe was chiefly concern'd in, with Sir *Courtly*, which I then acted. However, we ran them over, with a mutual Inadvertency of one another. I ſeem'd careleſs, as concluding, that any Aſſiſtance I could give her, would be to little, or no purpoſe; and ſhe mutter'd out her Words in a ſort of miſty manner, at my low Opinion of her. But when the Play came to be acted, ſhe had a juſt Occaſion to triumph over the Error of my Judgment, by the (almoſt) Amazement, that her unexpected Performance awak'd me to; ſo forward, and ſudden a Step into Nature, I had never ſeen; and what made her Performance more valuable, was, that I knew it all proceeded from her own Underſtanding, untaught, and unaſſiſted by any one more experienc'd Actor. Perhaps it may not be unacceptable, if I enlarge a little more upon the Theatrical Character of ſo memorable an Actreſs.

Though this Part of *Leonora*, in itſelf, was of ſo little value, that when ſhe grew more into Eſteem, it was one of the ſeveral ſhe gave away, to inferior Actreſſes; yet it was the firſt (as I have obſerv'd) that corrected my Judgment of her, and confirm'd me, in a ſtrong Belief, that ſhe could not fail, in very little time, of being what ſhe was afterwards allow'd to be, the foremoſt Ornament of our Theatre. Upon this unexpected Sally, then, of the Power, and Diſpoſition, of ſo unforeſeen an Actreſs, it was, that I again took up the two firſt Acts of the *Careleſs Husband*, which I had written the Summer before, and had thrown aſide, in deſpair of having Juſtice done to the Character of Lady *Betty Modiſh*, by any one Woman, then among us; Mrs. *Verbruggen* being now in a very declining ſtate of Health, and Mrs. *Bracegirdle* out of my Reach, and engag'd in another Company: But, as I have ſaid, Mrs. *Oldfield* having thrown out ſuch new Proffers of a Genius, I was no longer at a loſs for Support; my Doubts were diſpell'd, and I had now a new Call to finiſh it:

Ac-

Accordingly, the *Careleſs Husband* took its Fate upon the Stage, the Winter following, in 1704. Whatever favourable Reception, this Comedy has met with from the Publick; it would be unjuſt in me, not to place a large Share of it to the Account of Mrs. *Oldfield*; not only from the uncommon Excellence of her Action; but even from her perſonal manner of Converſing. There are many Sentiments in the Character of Lady *Betty Modiſh*, that I may almoſt ſay, were originally her own, or only dreſs'd with a little more Care, than when they negligently fell, from her lively Humour: Had her Birth plac'd her in a higher Rank of Life, ſhe had certainly appear'd, in reality, what in this Play ſhe only, excellently, acted, an agreeably gay Woman of Quality, a little too conſcious of her natural Attractions. I have often ſeen her, in private Societies, where Women of the beſt Rank might have borrow'd ſome part of her Behaviour, without the leaſt Diminution of their Senſe, or Dignity. And this very Morning, where I am now writing at the *Bath*, *November* 11, 1738, the ſame Words were ſaid of her, by a Lady of Condition, whoſe better Judgment of her Perſonal Merit, in that Light, has emboldened me to repeat them. After her Succeſs, in this Character of higher Life; all that Nature had given her of the Actreſs, ſeem'd to have riſen to its full Perfection: But the Variety of her Power could not be known, 'till ſhe was ſeen, in variety of Characters; which, as faſt as they fell to her, ſhe equally excell'd in. Authors had much more, from her Performance, than they had reaſon to hope for, from what they had written for her; and none had leſs than another, but as their Genius in the Parts they allotted her, was more or leſs elevated.

In the Wearing of her Perſon, ſhe was particularly fortunate; her Figure was always improving, to her Thirty-ſixth Year; but her Excellence in acting was never at a ſtand: And the laſt new Character ſhe ſhone in (*Lady Townly*) was a Proof that ſhe was ſtill able to do more, if more could have been done for *her*. She had one Mark of good Senſe, rarely known, in any Actor of ei-

ther Sex, but herſelf. I have obſerv'd ſeveral, with promiſing Diſpoſitions, very deſirous of Inſtruction at their firſt ſetting out; but no ſooner had they found their leaſt Account, in it, than they were, as deſirous of being left to their own Capacity, which they, then, thought would be diſgrac'd, by their ſeeming to want any farther Aſſiſtance. But this was not Mrs. *Oldfield*'s way of thinking; for to the laſt Year of her Life, ſhe never undertook any Part ſhe lik'd, without being importunately deſirous of having all the Helps in it, that another could poſſibly give her. By knowing ſo much herſelf, ſhe found how much more there was of Nature, yet needful to be known. Yet it was a hard matter to give her any Hint, that ſhe was not able to take, or improve. With all this Merit, ſhe was tractable, and leſs preſuming, in her Station, than ſeveral, that had not half her Pretenſions to be troubleſome: But ſhe loſt nothing by her eaſy Conduct; ſhe had every thing ſhe ask'd, which ſhe took care ſhould be always reaſonable, becauſe ſhe hated as much to be *grudg'd*, as *deny'd* a Civility. Upon her extraordinary Action in the *Provok'd Husband*, the Menagers made her a Preſent of Fifty Guineas more than her Agreement, which never was more than a Verbal one; for they knew ſhe was above deſerting them, to engage upon any other Stage, and ſhe was conſcious, they would never think it their Intereſt, to give her cauſe of Complaint. In the laſt two Months of her Illneſs, when ſhe was no longer able to aſſiſt them, ſhe declin'd receiving her Sallary, tho' by her Agreement, ſhe was entitled to it. Upon the whole, ſhe was, to the laſt Scene ſhe acted, the Delight of her Spectators: Why then may we not cloſe her Character, with the ſame Indulgence with which *Horace* ſpeaks of a commendable Poem:

Ubi plura nitent --- non ego paucis
Offendor maculis -------

Where in the whole, ſuch various Beauties ſhine,
'Twere idle, upon Errors, to refine.

What

What more might be ſaid of her as an Actreſs, may be found in the Preface to the *Provok'd Husband*, to which I refer the Reader.

With the Acquiſition, then, of ſo advanc'd a Comedian as Mrs. *Oldfield*, and the Addition of one ſo much in Favour as *Wilks*, and by the viſible Improvement of our other Actors, as *Penkethman*, *Johnſon*, *Bullock*, and I think I may venture to name myſelf in the Number (but, in what Rank, I leave to the Judgment of thoſe who have been my Spectators) the Reputation of our Company began to get ground; Mrs. *Oldfield*, and *Wilks*, by their frequently playing againſt one another, in our beſt Comedies, very happily ſupported that Humour, and Vivacity, which is ſo peculiar to our *Engliſh* Stage. The *French*, our only modern Competitors, ſeldom give us their Lovers, in ſuch various Lights: In their Comedies (however lively a People they are by nature) their Lovers are generally conſtant, ſimple Sighers, both of a Mind, and equally diſtreſs'd, about the Difficulties of their coming together; which naturally makes their Converſation ſo ſerious, that they are ſeldom good Company to their Auditors: And tho' I allow them many other Beauties, of which we are too negligent; yet our Variety of Humour has Excellencies that all their valuable Obſervance of Rules have never yet attain'd to. By theſe Advantages, then, we began to have an equal Share of the politer ſort of Spectators, who, for ſeveral Years, could not allow our Company to ſtand in any compariſon, with the other. But Theatrical Favour, like Publick Commerce, will ſometimes deceive the beſt Judgments, by an unaccountable change of its Channel; the beſt Commodities are not always known to meet with the beſt Markets. To this Decline of the Old Company, many Accidents might contribute; as the too diſtant Situation of their Theatre; or their want of a better, for it was not, then, in the condition it now is; but ſmall, and poorly fitted up, within the Walls of a Tennis *Quaree* Court, which is of the leſſer ſort. *Booth*, who was then a young Actor, among them, has often

told me of the Difficulties *Betterton*, then, labour'd under, and complain'd of: How impracticable he found it, to keep their Body to that common Order, which was neceſſary for their Support; of their relying too much upon their intrinſick Merit; and though but few of them were young, even when they firſt became their own Maſters, yet they were all now, ten Years older, and conſequently more liable to fall into an inactive Negligence, or were only ſeparately diligent, for themſelves, in the ſole Regard of their Benefit-Plays; which ſeveral of their Principals knew, at worſt, would raiſe them Contributions, that would more than tolerably ſubſiſt them, for the current Year. But as theſe were too precarious Expedients, to be always depended upon, and brought in nothing, to the general Support of the Numbers, who were at Sallaries under them; they were reduc'd to have recourſe to foreign Novelties; *L'Abbeè*, *Balon*, and Mademoiſelle *Subligny*, three of the, then, moſt famous Dancers of the *French* Opera, were, at ſeveral times, brought over at extraordinary Rates, to revive that ſickly Appetite, which plain Senſe, and Nature had ſatiated. But alas! there was no recovering to a ſound Conſtitution, by thoſe mere coſtly Cordials; the Novelty of a Dance, was but of a ſhort Duration, and perhaps hurtful, in its conſequence; for it made a Play, without a Dance, leſs endur'd, than it had been before, when ſuch Dancing was not to be had. But perhaps, their exhibiting theſe Novelties, might be owing to the Succeſs we had met with, in our more barbarous introducing of *French* Mimicks, and Tumblers the Year before; of which Mr. *Rowe*, thus complains in his Prologue to one of his firſt Plays:

> *Muſt* Shakeſpear, Fletcher, *and laborious* Ben,
> *Be left for* Scaramouch, *and* Harlequin?

While the Crowd, therefore, ſo fluctuated, from one Houſe, to another, as their Eyes were more, or leſs regaled, than their Ears, it could not be a Queſtion much in Debate, which had the better

ter Actors; the Merit of either, ſeem'd to be of little moment; and the Complaint in the foregoing Lines, tho' it might be juſt, for a time, could not be a juſt one for ever; becauſe the beſt Play that ever was writ, may tire by being too often repeated, a Misfortune naturally attending the Obligation, to play every Day; not that whenever ſuch Satiety commences, it will be any Proof of the Play's being a bad one, or of its being ill acted. In a word, Satiety is, ſeldom, enough conſider'd, by either Criticks, Spectators, or Actors, as the true, not to ſay juſt, Cauſe of declining Audiences, to the moſt rational Entertainments: And tho' I cannot ſay, I ever ſaw a good new Play, not attended with due Encouragement, yet to keep a Theatre daily open, without ſometimes giving the Publick a bad old one, is more than, I doubt, the Wit of human Writers, or Excellence of Actors, will ever be able to accompliſh. And, as both Authors, and Comedians, may have often ſucceeded, where a ſound Judgment would have condemn'd them, it might puzzle the niceſt Critick living, to prove in what ſort of Excellence, the true Value of either conſiſted: For, if their Merit were to be meaſur'd by the full Houſes, they may have brought; if the Judgment of the Crowd were infallible; I am afraid we ſhall be reduc'd to allow, that the *Beggars Opera* was the beſt-written Play, and Sir *Harry Wildair* (as *Wilks* play'd it) was the beſt acted Part, that ever our *Engliſh* Theatre had to boaſt of. That Critick indeed, muſt be rigid, to a Folly, that would deny either of them, their due Praiſe, when they ſeverally drew ſuch Numbers after them; all their Hearers could not be miſtaken; and yet, if they were all, in the right, what ſort of Fame will remain to thoſe celebrated Authors, and Actors, that had ſo long, and deſervedly been admired, before theſe were in Being. The only Diſtinction I ſhall make between them is, That to write, or act, like the Authors, or Actors, of the latter end of the laſt entury, I am of Opinion, will be found a far better Pretence to Succeſs, than to imitate theſe who have been ſo crowded to, in the beginning of this. All I would in-

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fer from this Explanation, is, that though we had, then, the better Audiences, and might have more of the young World on our Side; yet this was no ſure Proof, that the other Company were not, in the Truth of Action, greatly our Superiors. Theſe elder Actors, then, beſides the Diſadvantages I have mention'd, having only the fewer, true Judges to admire them, naturally wanted the Support of the Crowd, whoſe Taſte was to be pleas'd at a cheaper Rate, and with coarſer Fare. To recover them therefore, to their due Eſtimation, a new Project was form'd, of building them a ſtately Theatre, in the *Hay-Market*, by Sir *John Vanbrugh*, for which he rais'd a Subſcription of thirty Perſons of Quality, at one hundred Pounds each, in Conſideration whereof every Subſcriber, for his own Life, was to be admitted, to whatever Entertainments ſhould be publickly perform'd there, without farther Payment for his Entrance. Of this Theatre, I ſaw the firſt Stone laid, on which was inſcrib'd *The little Whig*, in Honour to a Lady of extraordinary Beauty, then the celebrated Toaſt, and Pride of that Party.

In the Year 1706, when this Houſe was finiſh'd, *Betterton*, and his Co-partners diſſolv'd their own Agreement, and threw themſelves under the Direction of Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*; imagining, perhaps, that the Conduct of two ſuch eminent Authors, might give a more proſperous Turn to their Condition; that the Plays, it would, now, be their Intereſt, to write for them, would ſoon recover the Town to a true Taſte, and be an Advantage, that no other Company could hope for; that in the Interim till ſuch Plays could be written, the Grandeur of their Houſe, as it was a new Spectacle, might allure the Crowd to ſupport them: But if theſe were their Views, we ſhall ſee, that their Dependence upon them, was too ſanguine. As to their Proſpect of new Plays, I doubt it was not enough conſider'd, that good ones were Plants of a ſlow Growth; and though, Sir *John Vanbrugh* had a very quick Pen, yet Mr. *Congreve* was too judicious a Writer, to let any thing come haſtily

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out of his Hands: As to their other Dependence, the Houſe, they had not yet diſcover'd, that almoſt every proper Quality, and Convenience of a good Theatre had been ſacrific'd, or neglected, to ſhew the Spectator a vaſt, triumphal Piece of Architecture! And that the beſt Play, for the Reaſons I am going to offer, could not but be under greater Diſadvantages, and be leſs capable of delighting the Auditor, here, than it could have been in the plain Theatre they came from. For what could their vaſt Columns, their gilded Cornices, their immoderate high Roofs avail, when ſcarce one Word in ten, could be diſtinctly heard in it? Nor had it, then, the Form, it now ſtands in, which Neceſſity, two or three Years after reduc'd it to: At the firſt opening it, the flat Cieling, that is now over the Orcheſtre, was then a Semi-oval Arch, that ſprung fifteen Feet higher from above the Cornice: The Cieling over the Pit too, was ſtill more rais'd, being one level Line from the higheſt back part of the upper Gallery, to the Front of the Stage: The Front-boxes were a continued Semicircle, to the bare Walls of the Houſe on each Side: This extraordinary, and ſuperfluous Space occaſion'd ſuch an Undulation, from the Voice of every Actor, that generally what they ſaid ſounded like the Gabbling of ſo many People, in the lofty Iſles in a Cathedral--- The Tone of a Trumpet, or the Swell of an Eunuch's holding Note, 'tis true, might be ſweeten'd by it; but the articulate Sounds of a ſpeaking Voice were drown'd, by the hollow Reverberations of one Word upon another. To this Inconvenience, why may we not add that of its Situation; for at that time it had not the Advantage of almoſt a large City, which has ſince been built, in its Neighbourhood: Thoſe coſtly Spaces of *Hanover*, *Groſvenor*, and *Cavendiſh* Squares, with the many, and great adjacent Streets about them, were then all but ſo many green Fields of Paſture, from whence they could draw little, or no Suſtenance, unleſs it were that of a Milk-Diet. The City, the Inns of Court, and the middle Part of the Town, which were the moſt conſtant Support

port of a Theatre, and chiefly to be rely'd on, were now too far, out of the Reach of an eaſy Walk; and Coach-hire is often too hard a Tax, upon the Pit, and Gallery. But from the vaſt Increaſe of the Buildings I have mention'd, the Situation of that Theatre has ſince that Time receiv'd conſiderable Advantages; a new World of People of Condition are nearer to it, than formerly, and I am of Opinion, that if the auditory Part were a little more reduc'd to the Model of that in *Drury-Lane*, an excellent Company of Actors would, now, find a better Account in it, than in any other Houſe in this populous City: Let me not be miſtaken, I ſay, an excellent Company, and ſuch as might be able to do Juſtice to the beſt of Plays, and throw out thoſe latent Beauties in them, which only excellent Actors can diſcover, and give Life to. If ſuch a Company were now there, they would meet with a quite different Set of Auditors, than other Theatres have lately been us'd to: Polite Hearers would be content with polite Entertainments; and I remember the time, when Plays, without the Aid of Farce, or Pantomine, were as decently attended as Opera's, or private Aſſemblies, where a noiſy Sloven would have paſt his time as uneaſily, in a Front-box, as in a Drawing-room; when a Hat upon a Man's Head there would have been look'd upon, as a ſure Mark of a Brute, or a Booby: But of all this I have ſeen too, the Reverſe, where in the Preſence of Ladies, at a Play, common Civility has been ſet at defiance, and the Privilege of being a rude Clown, even to a Nuſance, has, in a manner been demanded, as one of the Rights of *Engliſh* Liberty: Now, though I grant, that Liberty is ſo precious a Jewel, that we ought not to ſuffer the leaſt Ray of its Luſtre, to be diminiſh'd; yet methinks the Liberty of ſeeing a Play, in quiet, has as laudable a Claim to Protection, as the Privilege of not ſuffering you to do it, has to Impunity. But ſince we are ſo happy, as not to have a certain Power among us, which, in another Country is call'd the *Police*, let us rather bear this Inſult, than buy its Remedy at too dear a Rate; and

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let it be the Puniſhment of ſuch wrong-headed Savages, that they never will, or can know the true Value of that Liberty, which they ſo ſtupidly abuſe: Such vulgar Minds poſſeſs their Liberty, as profligate Husbands do fine Wives, only to diſgrace them. In a Word, when Liberty boils over, ſuch is the Scum of it. But to our new erected Theatre.

Not long before this time, the *Italian* Opera began firſt to ſteal into *England*; but in as rude a Diſguiſe, and unlike it ſelf, as poſſible; in a lame, hobling Tranſlation, into our own Language, with falſe Quantities, or metre out of Meaſure, to its original Notes, ſung by our own unskilful Voices, with Graces miſapply'd to almoſt every Sentiment, and with Action, lifeleſs and unmeaning, through every Character: The firſt *Italian* Performer, that made any diſtinguiſh'd Figure in it, was *Valentini*, a true ſenſible Singer, at that time, but of a Throat too weak, to ſuſtain thoſe melodious Warblings, for which the fairer Sex have ſince idoliz'd his Succeſſors. However, this Defect was ſo well ſupply'd by his Action, that his Hearers bore with the Abſurdity of his Singing his firſt Part of *Turnus* in *Camilla*, all in *Italian*, while every other Character was ſung and recited to him in *Engliſh*. This I have mention'd to ſhew not only our Tramontane Taſte, but that the crowded Audiences, which follow'd it to *Drury-Lane*, might be another Occaſion of their growing thinner in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*.

To ſtrike in, therefore, with this prevailing Novelty, Sir *John Vanbrugh*, and Mr. *Congreve*, open'd their new *Hay-Market Theatre*, with a tranſlated Opera, to *Italian* Muſick, call'd the *Triumph of Love*, but this not having in it, the Charms of *Camilla*, either from the Inequality of the Muſick, or Voices, had but a cold Reception, being perform'd but three Days, and thoſe not crowded. Immediately, upon the Failure of this *Opera*, Sir *John Vanbrugh* produc'd his Comedy call'd the *Confederacy*, taken (but greatly improv'd) from the *Bourgeois à la mode* of *Dancour*: Though the Fate of this Play was ſomething better,

yet I thought, it was not equal to its Merit: For it is written with an uncommon Vein of Wit and Humour; which confirms me, in my former Obſervation, that the difficulty of hearing diſtinctly in that, then wide Theatre, was no ſmall Impediment to the Applauſe, that might have follow'd the ſame Actors in it, upon any other Stage; and indeed every Play acted there, before the Houſe was alter'd, ſeem'd to ſuffer, from the ſame Inconvenience: In a Word, the Proſpect of Profits, from this Theatre was ſo very barren, that Mr. *Congreve*, in a few Months gave up his Share, and Intereſt in the Government of it, wholly to Sir *John Vanbrugh*. But Sir *John* being ſole Proprietor of the Houſe, was at all Events, oblig'd to do his utmoſt to ſupport it. As he had a happier Talent of throwing the *Engliſh* Spirit, into his Tranſlation of *French* Plays, than any former Author, who had borrow'd from them, he, in the ſame Seaſon, gave the Publick three more of that kind, call'd the *Cuckold in Conceit*; from the *Cocu imaginaire* of *Moliere*; *Squire Trelooby*, from his *Monſieur de Pourceaugnac*, and the *Miſtake*, from the *D'epit Amoureux* of the ſame Author. Yet all theſe, however well executed, came to the Ear in the ſame undiſtinguiſh'd Utterance, by which almoſt all their Plays had equally ſuffer'd: For what few could plainly hear, it was not likely a great many could applaud.

It muſt farther be conſider'd too, that this Company were, not now, what they had been, when they firſt revolted from the Patentees in *Drury-Lane*, and became their own Maſters, in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*. Several of them, excellent, in their different Talents, were now dead; as *Smith*, *Kynaſton*, *Sandford*, and *Leigh*: Mrs. *Betterton*, and *Underhill* being, at this time, alſo ſuperannuated Penſioners, whoſe Places were generally but ill ſupply'd: Nor could it be expected that *Betterton* himſelf, at paſt ſeventy, could retain his former Force, and Spirit; though he was yet far diſtant from any Competitor. Thus then were theſe Remains of the beſt Set of Actors, that I believe were ever known,

known, at once, in *England*, by Time, Death, and the Satiety of their Hearers mould'ring to decay.

It was, now, the Town-talk, that nothing but a Union of the two Companies could recover the Stage, to its former Reputation, which Opinion was certainly true: One would have thought too, that the Patentee of *Drury-Lane* could not have fail'd to close with it, he being, then, on the prosperous Side of the Question, having no Relief to ask for himself, and little more to do in the matter, than to consider what he might safely grant: But it seems this was not his way of counting; he had other Persons, who had great Claims to Shares, in the Profits of this Stage, which Profits, by a Union, he foresaw would be too visible, to be doubted of, and might raise up a new Spirit, in those Adventurers, to revive their Suits at Law with him; for he had led them a Chace in Chancery several Years, and when they had driven him, into a Contempt of that Court, he conjur'd up a Spirit, in the Shape of Six and eight Pence a-day, that constantly struck the Tipstaff blind, whenever he came near him: He knew the intrinsick Value of Delay, and was resolv'd to stick to it, as the surest way to give the Plantiffs enough on't. And by this Expedient our good Master had long walk'd about, at his Leisure, cool, and contented, as a Fox, when the Hounds were drawn off, and gone home from him. But whether I am right, or not, in my Conjectures, certain it is, that this close Master of *Drury-Lane*, had no Inclination to a Union, as will appear by the Sequel.

Sir *John Vanbrugh* knew too, that to make a Union worth his while, he must not seem too hasty for it; he therefore found himself under a Necessity, in the mean time of letting his whole Theatrical Farm to some industrious Tenant, that might put it into better Condition. This is that Crisis, as I observ'd, in the Eighth Chapter, when the Royal License, for acting Plays, *&c.* was judg'd of so little Value, as not to have one Suitor for it. At this time then, the Master of *Drury-Lane*

happen'd to have a ſort of primier Agent in his Stage-Affairs, that ſeem'd in Appearance as much to govern the Maſter, as the Maſter himſelf did to govern his Actors: But this Perſon was under no Stipulation, or Sallary, for the Service he render'd; but had gradually wrought himſelf into the Maſter's extraordinary Confidence, and Truſt, from an habitual Intimacy, a cheerful Humour, and an indefatigable Zeal for his Intereſt. If I ſhould farther ſay, that this Perſon has been well known in almoſt every Metropolis, in *Europe*; that few private Men have, with ſo little Reproach, run through more various Turns of Fortune; that, on the wrong ſide of Three-ſcore, he has yet the open Spirit of a hale young Fellow of five and twenty; that though he ſtill chuſes to ſpeak what he thinks, to his beſt Friends, with an undiſguis'd Freedom, he is, notwithſtanding acceptable to many Perſons of the firſt Rank, and Condition; that any one of them (provided he likes them) may now ſend him, for their Service, to *Conſtantinople*, at half a Day's Warning; that Time has, not yet, been able to make a viſible Change, in any Part of him, but the Colour of his Hair, from a fierce coal-black, to that of a milder milk-white: When I have taken this Liberty with him, methinks it cannot be taking a much greater, if I at once ſhould tell you, that this Perſon was Mr. *Owen Swiney*, and that it was to him Sir *John Vanbrugh*, in this Exigence of his Theatrical Affairs, made an Offer of his Actors, under ſuch Agreements of Sallary, as might be made with them; and of his Houſe, Cloaths, and Scenes, with the Queen's Licenſe to employ them, upon Payment of only the caſual Rent of five Pounds, upon every acting Day, and not to exceed 700 *l.* in the Year. Of this Propoſal, Mr. *Swiney* deſir'd a Day, or two to conſider; for however he might like it, he would not meddle in any ſort, without the Conſent, and Approbation of his Friend, and Patron, the Maſter of *Drury-Lane*. Having given the Reaſons why this Patentee was averſe to a Union, it may now ſeem leſs a Wonder, why he immediately conſented that *Swiney* ſhould take

take the *Hay-Market* Houſe, *&c.* and continue that Company to act againſt him; but the real Truth was, that he had a mind both Companies ſhould be clandeſtinely under one, and the ſame Intereſt; and yet in ſo looſe a manner, that he might declare his Verbal Agreement with *Swiney* good, or null, and void, as he might beſt find his Account in either. What flatter'd him, that he had this wholeſom Project, and *Swiney* to execute it, both in his Power, was, that at this time, *Swiney* happen'd to ſtand in his Books, Debtor to Caſh, upwards of Two Hundred Pounds: But here, we ſhall find, he over-rated his Security. However, *Swiney* as yet follow'd his Orders; he took the *Hay-Market* Theatre, and had farther, the private Conſent of the Patentee, to take ſuch of his Actors from *Drury-Lane*, as either from Inclination, or Diſcontent, might be willing to come over to him, in the *Hay-Market*. The only one he made an Exception of, was myſelf: For tho' he chiefly depended upon his Singers, and Dancers, he ſaid, it would be neceſſary to keep ſome one tolerable Actor with him, that might enable him to ſet thoſe Machines a going. Under this Limitation, of not entertaining me, *Swiney* ſeem'd to acquieſce, 'till after he had open'd, with the ſo recruited Company, in the *Hay-Market*: the Actors that came to him from *Drury-Lane*, were *Wilks*, *Eſtcoart*, *Mills*, *Keen*, *Johnſon*, *Bullock*, Mrs. *Oldfield*, Mrs. *Rogers*, and ſome few others of leſs note: But I muſt here let you know, that this Project was form'd, and put in Execution, all in very few Days, in the Summer-Seaſon, when no Theatre was open. To all which I was entirely a Stranger, being at this time at a Gentleman's Houſe in *Glouceſterſhire*, ſcribbling, if I miſtake not, the *Wife's Reſentment*.

The firſt Word I heard of this Tranſaction, was by a Letter from *Swiney*, inviting me to make One in the *Hay-Market* Company, whom he hop'd I could not but now think the ſtronger Party. But, I confeſs, I was not a little alarm'd, at this Revolution: For I conſider'd, that I knew of no viſible Fund to ſup-

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port theſe Actors, but their own Induſtry; that all his Recruits from *Drury-Lane* would want new Cloathing; and that the warmeſt Induſtry would be always labouring up Hill, under ſo neceſſary an Expence, ſo bad a Situation, and ſo inconvenient a Theatre. I was always of opinion too, that in changing Sides, in moſt Conditions, there generally were diſcovered more unforeſeen Inconveniencies, than viſible Advantages; and that at worſt, there would always ſome ſort of Merit remain with Fidelity, tho' unſucceſsful. Upon theſe Conſiderations, I was only thankful for the Offers made me, from the *Hay-Market*, without accepting them; and ſoon after came to Town towards the uſual time of their beginning to act, to offer my Service to our old Maſter. But I found our Company ſo thinn'd, that it was almoſt impracticable, to bring any one tolerable Play upon the Stage. When I ask'd him, where were his Actors, and in what manner he intended to proceed? he reply'd, *Don't you trouble yourſelf, come along, and I'll ſhew you.* He then led me about all the By-places in the Houſe, and ſhew'd me fifty little Back-doors, dark Cloſets, and narrow Paſſages, in Alterations and Contrivances of which kind he had buſied his Head, moſt part of the Vacation; for he was ſcarce ever, without ſome notable Joyner, or a Bricklayer extraordinary, in pay, for twenty Years. And there are ſo many odd obſcure Places about a Theatre, that his Genius in Nook-building was never out of Employment; nor could the moſt vain-headed Author, be more deaf to an Interruption in reciting his Works, than our wiſe Maſter was, while entertaining me with the Improvements he had made in his inviſible Architecture; all which, without thinking any one Part of it neceſſary; tho' I ſeem'd to approve, I could not help, now and then, breaking in, upon his Delight, with the impertinent Queſtion of--- *But, Maſter, where are your Actors?* But it ſeems I had taken a wrong time for this ſort of Enquiry; his Head was full of Matters of more moment (and, as you find) I was to come another time for an Anſwer: A very hopeful condition

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I found myſelf in, under the Conduct of ſo profound a Vertuoſo, and ſo conſiderate a Maſter! But, to ſpeak of him ſeriouſly, and to account for this Diſregard to his Actors, his Notion was, that Singing, and Dancing, or any ſort of Exotick Entertainments, would make an ordinary Company of Actors too hard, for the beſt Set, who had only plain Plays to ſubſiſt on. Now, tho' I am afraid too much might be ſaid, in favour of this Opinion, yet I thought he laid more Streſs upon that ſort of Merit, than it would bear; as I therefore found myſelf of ſo little Value with him, I could not help ſetting a little more upon myſelf, and was reſolv'd to come to a ſhort Explanation with him. I told him, I came to ſerve him, at a time, when many of his beſt Actors had deſerted him; that he might now have the Refuſal of me; but I could not afford to carry the Compliment ſo far, as to leſſen my Income by it; that I therefore expected, either my caſual Pay to be advanced, or the Payment of my former Sallary made certain, for, as many Days, as we had acted the Year before. --- No, he was not willing to alter his former Method; but I might chuſe whatever Parts I had a mind to act, of theirs who had left him. When I found him, as I thought, ſo inſenſible, or impregnable, I look'd gravely in his Face, and told him --- He knew upon what Terms, I was willing to ſerve him; and took my leave. By this time, the *Hay-Market* Company had begun acting, to Audiences ſomething better than uſual, and were all paid their full Sallaries, a Bleſſing they had not felt, in ſome Years, in either Houſe before. Upon this Succeſs, *Swiney* preſs'd the Patentee to execute the Articles they had as yet only verbally agreed on, which were in Subſtance, That *Swiney* ſhould take the *Hay-Market* Houſe in his own Name, and have what Actors he thought neceſſary from *Drury-Lane*, and after all Payments punctually made, the Profits ſhould be equally divided between theſe two Undertakers. But ſoft, and fair! Raſhneſs was a Fault, that had never yet been imputed to the Patentee; certain Payments were Methods he had not of a

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long, long time been us'd to; that Point ſtill wanted time for Conſideration. But *Swiney* was as haſty, as the other was ſlow, and was reſolv'd to know what he had to truſt to, before they parted; and to keep him the cloſer, to his Bargain, he ſtood upon his Right of having *Me* added to that Company, if I was willing to come into it. But this was a Point as abſolutely refus'd on one ſide, as inſiſted on, on the other. In this Conteſt, high Words were exchang'd on both ſides, 'till, in the end, this their laſt private Meeting came to an open Rupture: But before it was publickly known, *Swiney*, by fairly letting me into the whole Tranſaction, took effectual means to ſecure me in his Intereſt. When the Myſtery of the Patentee's Indifference to me was unfolded, and that his ſlighting me, was owing, to the Security he rely'd on, of *Swiney*'s not daring to engage me, I could have no further Debate with myſelf, which ſide of the Queſtion I ſhould adhere to. To conclude, I agreed, in two Words, to act with *Swiney*; and from this time, every Change that happen'd in the Theatrical Government, was a nearer Step to that twenty Years of Proſperity, which Actors, under the Menagement of Actors, not long afterwards, enjoy'd. What was the immediate Conſequence of this laſt Deſertion from *Drury-Lane*, ſhall be the Subject of another Chapter.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

The recruited Actors, in the Hay-Market, *encourag'd by a Subſcription.* Drury-Lane, *under a particular Menagement. The Power of a Lord-Chamberlain, over the Theatres, conſider'd. How it had been formerly exercis'd. A Digreſſion to Tragick Authors.*

HAVING ſhewn the particular Conduct of the Patentee, in refuſing ſo fair an Opportunity of ſecuring to himſelf both Companies, under his ſole Power, and Intereſt; I ſhall now lead the Reader, after a ſhort View of what paſs'd in this new Eſtabliſhment of the *Hay-Market* Theatre, to the Accidents, that the Year following, compell'd the ſame Patentee, to receive both Companies, united, into the *Drury-Lane* Theatre, notwithſtanding his Diſinclination to it.

It may, now, be imagin'd, that ſuch a Detachment of Actors, from *Drury-Lane*, could not but give a new Spirit to thoſe in the *Hay-Market*; not only by enabling them to act each others Plays to better Advantage; but by an emulous Induſtry, which had lain too long inactive among them, and without which they plainly ſaw, they could not be ſure of Subſiſtance. Plays, by this means began to recover a good Share of their former Eſteem, and Favour; and the Profits of them, in about a Month, enabled our new Menager to diſcharge his Debt (of ſomething more than Two Hundred Pounds) to his old Friend, the Patentee; who had now left him, and his Troop, in truſt, to fight their own Battles. The greateſt Inconvenience they ſtill labour'd under, was the immoderate Wideneſs of their Houſe; in which, as I have obſerv'd, the Difficulty of Hearing, may be ſaid to have bury'd half

the Auditors Entertainment. This Defect ſeem'd evident, from the much better Reception ſeveral new Plays (firſt acted there) met with when they afterwards came to be play'd by the ſame Actors, in *Drury-Lane:* Of this Number were the *Stratagem*, and the *Wife's Reſentment*; to which I may add, the *Double Gallant*. This laſt, was a Play made up of what little was tolerable, in two, or three others, that had no Succeſs, and were laid aſide, as ſo much Poetical Lumber; but by collecting and adapting the beſt Parts of 'em all, into one Play, the *Double Gallant* has had a Place, every Winter, amongſt the Publick Entertainments, theſe Thirty Years. As I was only the Compiler of this Piece, I did not publiſh it in my own Name; but as my having but a Hand in it, could not be long a Secret, I have been often treated as a Plagiary on that Account: Not that I think I have any Right to complain, of whatever would detract from the Merit of that ſort of Labour; yet, a Cobler may be allow'd to be uſeful, though he is not famous: And I hope a Man is not blameable for doing a little Good, tho' he cannot do as much as another? But ſo it is --- Twopenny Criticks muſt live, as well as Eighteenpenny Authors!

While the Stage was thus recovering its former Strength, a more honourable Mark of Favour was ſhewn to it, than it was ever known before, or ſince, to have receiv'd. The, then, Lord *Hallifax*, was not only the Patron of the Men of Genius of this Time, but had likewiſe a generous Concern for the Reputation, and Proſperity of the Theatre, from whence the moſt elegant Dramatick Labours of the Learned, he knew, had often ſhone in their brighteſt Luſtre. A Propoſal therefore was drawn up, and addreſs'd to that Noble Lord for his Approbation, and Aſſiſtance, to raiſe a publick Subſcription for Reviving Three Plays of the beſt Authors, with the full Strength of the Company; every Subſcriber to have Three Tickets, for the firſt Day of each Play, for his ſingle Payment of Three Guineas. This Subſcription his Lordſhip ſo zealouſly encourag'd, that from his Recommendation

mendation chiefly, in a very little time, it was compleated. The Plays were *Julius Cæſar* of *Shakeſpear*; the *King and no King* of *Fletcher*; and the Comic Scenes of *Dryden*'s *Marriage à la mode*, and of his *Maiden Queen* put together, for it was judg'd, that as theſe comic Epiſodes were utterly independent of the ſerious Scenes, they were originally written to, they might on this Occaſion be as well Epiſodes either to the other, and ſo make up five livelier Acts between them: At leaſt the Project ſo well ſucceeded, that thoſe comic Parts have never ſince been replac'd, but were continu'd to be jointly acted, as one Play, ſeveral Years after.

By the Aid of this Subſcription, which happen'd in 1707, and by the additional Strength, and Induſtry of this Company, not only the Actors, (ſeveral of which were handſomely advanc'd, in their Sallaries) were duly paid, but the Menager himſelf too, at the Foot of his Account ſtood a conſiderable Gainer.

At the ſame time, the Patentee of *Drury-Lane* went on in his uſual Method of paying extraordinary Prices to Singers, Dancers, and other exotick Performers, which were as conſtantly deducted out of the ſinking Sallaries of his Actors: 'Tis true, his Actors, perhaps, might not deſerve much more, than he gave them; yet, by what I have related, it is plain he choſe not to be troubled, with ſuch, as viſibly had deſerv'd more: For it ſeems he had not purchas'd his Share of the Patent, to mend the Stage, but to make Mony of it: And to ſay Truth, his Senſe of every thing to be ſhewn there, was much upon a Level, with the Taſte of the Multitude, whoſe Opinion, and whoſe Mony weigh'd with him full as much, as that of the beſt Judges. His Point was to pleaſe the Majority, who, could more eaſily comprehend anything they *ſaw*, than the daintieſt things, that could be ſaid to them. But in this Notion he kept no medium; for in my Memory, he carry'd it ſo far, that he was (ſome few Years before this time) actually dealing for an extraordinary large Elephant, at a certain Sum, for every Day he might think fit to ſhew the

tractable Genius of that vaſt quiet Creature, in any Play, or Farce, in the Theatre (then ſtanding) in *Dorſet-Garden.* But from the Jealouſy, which ſo formidable a Rival had rais'd in his Dancers, and by his Bricklayer's aſſuring him, that if the Walls were to be open'd wide enough for its Entrance, it might endanger the Fall of the Houſe, he gave up his Project, and with it, ſo hopeful a Proſpect of making the Receipts of the Stage run higher than all the Wit, and Force of the beſt Writers had ever yet rais'd them to.

About the ſame time of his being under this Diſappointment, he put in Practice another Project of as new, though not of ſo bold a Nature; which was his introducing a Set of Rope-dancers, into the ſame Theatre; for the firſt Day of whoſe Performance, he had given out ſome Play, in which, I had a material Part: But I was hardy enough to go into the Pit, and acquainted the Spectators near me, that I hop'd, they would not think it a Mark of my Diſreſpect to them, if I declin'd acting upon any Stage, that was brought to ſo low a Diſgrace, as ours was like to be by that Day's Entertainment. My Excuſe was ſo well taken, that I never after found any ill Conſequences, or heard of the leaſt Diſapprobation of it: And the whole Body of Actors too, proteſting againſt ſuch an Abuſe of their Profeſſion, our cautious Maſter was too much alarm'd, and intimidated to repeat it.

After what I have ſaid, it will be no Wonder, that all due Regards to the original Uſe, and Inſtitution of the Stage ſhould be utterly loſt, or neglected: Nor was the Conduct of this Menager eaſily to be alter'd, while he had found the Secret of making Mony, out of Diſorder and Confuſion: For however ſtrange it may ſeem, I have often obſerv'd him inclin'd to be cheerful, in the Diſtreſſes of his Theatrical Affairs, and equally reſerv'd and penſive, when they went ſmoothly forward with a viſible Profit. Upon a Run of good Audiences, he was more frighted to be thought a Gainer, which might make him accountable to others, than he was dejected with bad Houſes, which

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at worſt, he knew would make others accountable to him: And as, upon a moderate Computation, it cannot be ſuppos'd, that the conteſted Accounts of a twenty Years Wear, and Tear, in a Play-houſe, could be fairly adjuſted by a Maſter in Chancery, under four-ſcore Years more, it will be no Surprize, that by the Neglect, or rather the Diſcretion of other Proprietors, in not throwing away good Money after bad, this Hero of a Menager, who alone ſupported the War, ſhould in time ſo fortify himſelf by Delay, and ſo tire his Enemies, that he became ſole Monarch of his Theatrical Empire, and left the quiet Poſſeſſion of it, to his Succeſſors.

If theſe Facts ſeem too trivial for the Attention of a ſenſible Reader, let it be conſider'd, that they are not choſen Fictions, to *entertain*, but Truths neceſſary to *inform* him, under what low Shifts, and Diſgraces, what Diſorders and Revolutions the Stage labour'd, before it could recover that Strength, and Reputation, wherewith it began to flouriſh, towards the latter End of Queen *Anne*'s Reign; and which it continu'd to enjoy, for a Courſe of twenty Years following. But let us reſume our Account of the new Settlement, in the *Hay-Market*.

It may be a natural Queſtion, why the Actors, whom *Swiney* brought over to his Undertaking, in the *Hay-Market*, would tie themſelves down to limited Sallaries? for though he, as their Menager was oblig'd to make them certain Payments, it was not certain that the Receipts would enable him to do it; and ſince their own Induſtry was the only viſible Fund they had to depend upon, why would they not, for that Reaſon, inſiſt upon their being Sharers as well of poſſible Profits, as Loſſes? How far in this Point, they acted right, or wrong, will appear from the following State of their Caſe.

It muſt firſt be conſider'd, that this Scheme of their Deſertion, was all concerted, and put in execution in a Week's Time, which ſhort Warning might make them overlook that Circumſtance, and the ſudden Proſpect of being deliver'd from having ſeldom

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more, than half their Pay, was a Contentment that had bounded all their farther Views. Beſides, as there could be no room to doubt of their receiving their full Pay, previous to any Profits, that might be reap'd by their Labour, and as they had no great Reaſon to apprehend thoſe Profits could exceed their reſpective Sallaries, ſo far as to make them repine at them, they might think it but reaſonable, to let the Chance of any extraordinary Gain be on the Side of their Leader, and Director. But farther, as this Scheme had the Approbation of the Court, theſe Actors, in reality, had it not, in their Power to alter any Part of it: And what induc'd the Court to encourage it, was, that by having the Theatre, and its Menager more immediately dependent on the Power of the Lord Chamberlain, it was not doubted but the Stage would be recover'd into ſuch a Reputation, as might now do Honour, to that abſolute Command, which the Court, or its Officers ſeem'd always fond of having over it.

Here, to ſet the Conſtitution of the Stage in a clearer Light, it may not be amiſs, to look back a little on the Power of a Lord Chamberlain, which, as may have been obſerv'd, in all Changes of the Theatrical Government, has been the main Spring without which no Scheme, of what kind ſoever, could be ſet in Motion. My Intent is not to enquire how far, by Law, this Power has been limited, or extended; but meerly as an Hiſtorian, to relate Facts, to gratify the Curious, and then leave them to their own Reflections: This, too, I am the more inclin'd to, becauſe there is no one Circumſtance, which has affected the Stage, wherein ſo many Spectators, from thoſe of the higheſt Rank, to the Vulgar, have ſeem'd more poſitively knowing, or leſs inform'd in.

Though in all the Letters Patent, for acting Plays, *&c.* ſince King *Charles* the *Firſt*'s Time, there has been no mention of the Lord Chamberlain, or of any Subordination to his Command, or Authority--- yet it was ſtill taken for granted, that no Letters Patent,

Patent, by the bare Omiſſion of ſuch a great Officer's Name, could have ſuperſeded, or taken out of his Hands, that Power, which Time out of Mind, he always had exercis'd over the Theatre. The common Opinions then abroad were, that if the Profeſſion of Actors was unlawful, it was not in the Power of the Crown to licenſe it; and, if it were not unlawful, it ought to be free, and independent, as other Profeſſions; and that a Patent to exerciſe it, was only an honorary Favour, from the Crown, to give it a better Grace of Recommendation to the Publick. But as the Truth of this Queſtion ſeem'd to be wrapt in a great deal of Obſcurity, in the old Laws made in former Reigns, relating to Players, *&c.* it may be no Wonder, that the beſt Companies of Actors ſhould be deſirous of taking Shelter under the viſible Power of a Lord Chamberlain, who they knew had, at his Pleaſure, favour'd, and protected, or born hard upon them: But be all this as it may, a Lord Chamberlain (from whenceſoever his Power might be deriv'd) had, till of later Years, had always an implicit Obedience paid to it: I ſhall now give ſome few Inſtances, in what manner it was exercis'd.

What appear'd to be moſt reaſonably, under his Cognizance was the licenſing, or refuſing new Plays, or ſtriking out what might be thought offenſive, in them: Which Province had been, for many Years, aſſign'd to his inferior Officer, the Maſter of the Revels; yet was not this Licenſe irrevocable; for ſeveral Plays, though acted, by that Permiſſion, had been ſilenc'd afterwards. The firſt Inſtance of this kind, that common Fame has delivered down to us, is that of the *Maid's Tragedy* of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, which was forbid in King *Charles* the *Second*'s time, by an Order from the Lord Chamberlain. For what Reaſon this Interdiction was laid upon it, the Politicks of thoſe Days, have only left us to gueſs. Some ſaid, that the killing of the King, in that Play, while the tragical Death of King *Charles* the *Firſt*, was then ſo freſh, in People's Memory, was an Object too horribly impious, for a publick Entertainment. What makes this Con-

Conjecture ſeem to have ſome Foundation, is that the celebrated *Waller*, in Compliment to that Court, alter'd the laſt Act of this Play (which is printed at the End of his Works) and gave it a new Cataſtrophe, wherein the Life of the King is loyally ſav'd, and the Lady's Matter made up, with a leſs terrible Reparation. Others have given out, that a repenting Miſtreſs, in a romantick Revenge of her Diſhonour, killing the King, in the very Bed he expected her to come into, was ſhewing a too dangerous Example to other *Evadnes*, then ſhining at Court, in the ſame Rank of royal Diſtinction; who, if ever their Conſciences ſhould have run equally mad, might have had frequent Opportunities of putting the Expiation of their Frailty, into the like Execution. But this I doubt is too deep a Speculation, or too ludicrous a Reaſon, to be rely'd on; it being well known, that the Ladies, then in favour, were not ſo nice, in their Notions, as to think their Preferment their Diſhonour, or their Lover a Tyrant: Beſides, that eaſy Monarch lov'd his Roſes, without Thorns; nor do we hear, that he much choſe, to be himſelf the firſt Gatherer of them.

The *Lucius Junius Brutus* of *Nat. Lee*, was, in the ſame Reign, ſilenc'd after the third Day of acting it; it being objected, that the Plan, and Sentiments of it had too boldly vindicated, and might enflame Republican Principles.

A Prologue (by *Dryden)* to the *Propheteſs*, was forbid by the Lord *Dorſet*, after the firſt Day of its being ſpoken. This happen'd when King *William* was proſecuting the War, in *Ireland*. It muſt be confeſs'd, that this Prologue had ſome familiar, metaphorical Sneers, at the Revolution itſelf; and as the Poetry of it was good, the Offence of it was leſs pardonable.

The Tragedy of *Mary* Queen of *Scotland*, had been offer'd to the Stage twenty Years before it was acted: But from the profound Penetration of the Maſter of the Revels, who ſaw political Spectres in it, that never appear'd in the Preſentation, it had lain, ſo long upon the Hands of the Author; who had at laſt,

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the good Fortune to prevail with a Nobleman, to favour his Petition to Queen *Anne*, for Permiſſion to have it acted: The Queen had the Goodneſs to refer the Merit of his Play, to the Opinion of that noble Perſon, although he was not her Majeſty's Lord Chamberlain; upon whoſe Report of its being, every way, an innocent Piece, it was ſoon after acted with Succeſs.

Reader, by your Leave--- I will but juſt ſpeak a Word, or two to any Author, that has not yet writ one Line of his next Play, and then I will come to my Point again--- What I would ſay to him, is this--- Sir, before you ſet Pen to Paper, think well, and principally of your Deſign, or chief Action, towards which every Line you write ought to be drawn, as to its Centre: If we can ſay of your fineſt Sentiments, This, or That might be left out, without maiming the Story you would tell us, depend upon it, that fine thing is ſaid in a wrong Place; and though you may urge, that a bright Thought is not to be reſiſted, you will not be able to deny, that thoſe very fine Lines would be much finer, if you could find a proper Occaſion for them: Otherwiſe you will be thought to take leſs Advice from *Ariſtotle*, or *Horace*, than from Poet *Bays* in the *Rehearſal*, who very ſmartly ſays--- *What the Devil is the Plot good for, but to bring in fine things?* Compliment the Taſte of your Hearers, as much as you pleaſe with them, provided they belong to your Subject, but don't like a dainty Preacher, who has his Eye more upon this World, than the next, leave your Text for them. When your Fable is good, every Part of it will coſt you much leſs Labour, to keep your Narration alive, than you will be forced to beſtow upon thoſe elegant Diſcourſes, that are not abſolutely conducive to your Cataſtrophe, or main Purpoſe: Scenes of that kind, ſhew but at beſt, the unprofitable, or injudicious Spirit of a Genius. It is but a melancholy Commendation of a fine Thought, to ſay, when we have heard it, *Well! but what's all this to the Purpoſe?* Take therefore, in ſome part, Example by the Author laſt mention'd! There are three Plays of his, The *Earl* of *Eſſex*, *Anna*

Bullen, and *Mary Queen of Scots*, which tho' they are all written in the moſt barren, barbarous Stile, that was ever able to keep Poſſeſſion of the Stage, have all intereſted the Hearts of his Auditors. To what then could this Succeſs be owing, but to the intrinſick, and naked Value of the well-conducted Tales, he has ſimply told us? There is ſomething ſo happy in the Diſpoſition of all his Fables; all his chief Characters are thrown into ſuch natural Circumſtances of Diſtreſs, that their Miſery, or Affliction wants very little Aſſiſtance from the Ornaments of Stile, or Words to ſpeak them. When a skilful Actor is ſo ſituated, his bare plaintive Tone of Voice, the Caſt of Sorrow from his Eye, his ſlowly graceful Geſture, his humble Sighs of Reſignation under his Calamities: All theſe, I ſay, are ſometimes without a Tongue, equal to the ſtrongeſt Eloquence. At ſuch a time, the attentive Auditor ſupplies from his own Heart, whatever the Poet's Language may fall ſhort of, in Expreſſion, and melts himſelf into every Pang of Humanity, which the like Misfortunes in real Life could have inſpir'd.

After what I have obſerv'd, whenever I ſee a Tragedy defective in its Fable, let there be never ſo many fine Lines in it; I hope I ſhall be forgiven, if I impute that Defect, to the Idleneſs, the weak Judgment, or barren Invention of the Author.

If I ſhould be ask'd, why I have not always, my ſelf, follow'd the Rules I would impoſe upon others; I can only anſwer, that whenever I have not, I lie equally open to the ſame critical Cenſure. But having often obſerv'd a better than ordinary Stile thrown away, upon the looſe, and wandering Scenes of an ill-choſen Story, I imagin'd theſe Obſervations might convince ſome future Author, of how great Advantage a Fable well plann'd muſt be to a Man of any tolerable Genius.

All this, I own, is leading my Reader out of the way; but if he has as much Time upon his Hands, as I have, (provided we are neither of us tir'd) it may be equally to the Purpoſe, what he reads, or what I write of. But as I have no Objection

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to Method, when it is not troubleſome, I return to my Subject.

Hitherto we have ſeen no very unreaſonable Inſtance of this abſolute Power of a Lord Chamberlain, though we were to admit, that no one knew of any real Law, or Conſtruction of Law, by which this Power was given him. I ſhall now offer ſome Facts relating to it of a more extraordinary Nature, which I leave my Reader to give a Name to.

About the middle of King *William*'s Reign, an Order of the Lord Chamberlain was, then, ſubſiſting, that no Actor of either Company, ſhould preſume to go from one, to the other, without a Diſcharge from their reſpective Menagers, and the Permiſſion of the Lord Chamberlain. Notwithſtanding ſuch Order, *Powel* being uneaſy, at the Favour, *Wilks*, was then riſing into, had without ſuch Diſcharge, left the *Drury-Lane* Theatre, and engag'd himſelf to that of *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*: But by what follows, it will appear, that this Order was not ſo much intended, to do both of them *good*, as to do, that which the Court chiefly favour'd *(Lincolns-Inn-Fields)* no harm. For when *Powel* grew diſſatisfy'd at his Station there too, he return'd to *Drury-Lane* (as he had before gone from it) without a Diſcharge: But halt a little! here, on this Side of the Queſtion, the Order was to ſtand, in force, and the ſame Offence againſt it now, was not to be equally paſs'd over. He was the next Day taken up by a Meſſenger, and confin'd to the Porter's-Lodge, where, to the beſt of my Remembrance, he remain'd about two Days; when the Menagers of *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, not thinking an Actor of his looſe Character worth their farther Trouble, gave him up; though perhaps he was releas'd, for ſome better Reaſon. Upon this occaſion, the next Day, behind the Scenes, at *Drury-Lane*, a Perſon of great Quality, in my hearing, enquiring of *Powel*, into the Nature of his Offence, after he had heard it, told him, That if he had had Patience, or Spirit enough, to have ſtaid in his

Confinement, till he had given him Notice of it, he would have found him a handſomer way of coming out of it.

Another Time the ſame Actor, *Powel*, was provok'd at *Will*'s Coffee-houſe, in a Diſpute about the Play-houſe Affairs, to ſtrike a Gentleman, whoſe Family had been ſometimes Maſters of it; a Complaint of this Inſolence was, in the Abſence of the Lord Chamberlain, immediately made to the Vice-Chamberlain, who ſo highly reſented it, that he thought himſelf bound in Honour, to carry his Power of redreſſing it, as far as it could poſſibly go: For *Powel* having a Part in the Play, that was acted the Day after; the Vice-Chamberlain ſent an Order to ſilence the whole Company, for having ſuffer'd *Powel* to appear upon the Stage, before he had made that Gentleman Satisfaction, although the Maſters of the Theatre had had no Notice of *Powel*'s Misbehaviour: However, this Order was obey'd, and remain'd in force for two or three Days, till the ſame Authority was pleas'd, or advis'd, to revoke it. From the Meaſures this injur'd Gentleman took for his Redreſs, it may be judg'd how far it was taken for granted, that a Lord Chamberlain had an abſolute Power over the Theatre.

I ſhall now give an Inſtance of an Actor, who had the Reſolution to ſtand upon the Defence of his Liberty, againſt the ſame Authority, and was reliev'd by it.

In the ſame King's Reign, *Dogget*, who though, from a ſevere Exactneſs in his Nature, he could be ſeldom long eaſy in any Theatre, where Irregularity, not to ſay Injuſtice, too often prevail'd, yet in the private Conduct of his Affairs, he was a prudent, honeſt Man. He therefore took an unuſual Care, when he return'd to act under the Patent, in *Drury-Lane*, to have his Articles drawn firm and binding: But having ſome Reaſon to think the Patentee had not dealt fairly with him, he quitted the Stage, and would act no more, rather chuſing to loſe his whatever unſatisfy'd, Demands, than go through the chargeable,

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and tedious Courſe of the Law to recover it. But the Patentee, who (from other People's Judgment) knew the Value of him, and who wanted too, to have him ſooner back, than the Law could poſſibly bring him, thought the ſurer way would be, to deſire a ſhorter Redreſs from the Authority of the Lord Chamberlain. Accordingly upon his Complaint, a Meſſenger was immediately diſpatch'd to *Norwich*, where *Dogget* then was, to bring him up, in Cuſtody: But doughty *Dogget*, who had Mony in his Pocket, and the Cauſe of Liberty at his Heart, was not, in the leaſt intimidated, by this formidable Summons. He was obſerv'd to obey it, with a particular Chearfulneſs, entertaining his fellow Traveller, the Meſſenger, all the way in the Coach (for he had proteſted againſt riding) with as much Humour, as a Man of his Buſineſs might be capable of taſting. And as he found his Charges were to be defray'd, he, at every Inn, call'd for the beſt Dainties the Country could afford, or a pretended weak Appetite could digeſt. At this Rate they jollily roll'd on, more with the Air of a Jaunt, than a Journey, or a Party of Pleaſure, than of a poor Devil in durance. Upon his Arrival in Town, he immediately apply'd to the Lord Chief Juſtice *Holt*, for his *Habeas Corpus*. As his Caſe was ſomething particular, that eminent, and learned Miniſter of the Law took a particular Notice of it: For *Dogget* was not only diſcharg'd, but the Proceſs of his Confinement (according to common Fame) had a Cenſure paſs'd upon it, in Court, which I doubt, I am not Lawyer enough to repeat! To conclude, the officious Agents in this Affair finding, that, in *Dogget*, they had miſtaken their Man, were mollify'd into milder Proceedings, and (as he afterwards told me) whiſper'd ſomething, in his Ear, that took away *Dogget*'s farther Uneaſineſs about it.

By theſe Inſtances we ſee how naturally Power only founded on Cuſtom, is apt, where the Law is ſilent, to run into Exceſſes, and while it laudably pretends to govern others, how hard it is to govern itſelf. But ſince the Law has lately open'd its Mouth,

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and has ſaid plainly, that ſome Part of this Power to govern the Theatre ſhall be, and is plac'd in a proper Perſon; and as it is evident, that the Power of that white Staff, ever ſince it has been in the noble Hand, that now holds it, has been us'd with the utmoſt Lenity, I would beg Leave of the murmuring Multitude, who frequent the Theatre, to offer them a ſimple Queſtion or two, *viz.* Pray Gentlemen, how came you, or rather your Fore-fathers never to be mutinous, upon any of the occaſional Facts I have related? And why have you been ſo often tumultuous, upon a Law's being made, that only confirms a leſs Power, than was formerly exercis'd, without any Law to ſupport it? You cannot ſure, ſay, ſuch Diſcontent is either juſt, or natural, unleſs you allow it a Maxim in your Politicks, that Power exercis'd *without* Law, is a leſs Grievance, than the ſame Power exercis'd *according* to law!

Having thus given the cleareſt View I was able, of the uſual Regard paid to the Power of a Lord Chamberlain, the Reader will more eaſily conceive, what Influence, and Operation that Power muſt naturally have, in all Theatrical Revolutions; and particularly in the complete Re-union of both Companies, which happen'd in the Year following.

CHAP. XI.

Some Chimærical Thoughts of making the Stage uſeful: Some, to its Reputation. The Patent unprofitable, to all the Proprietors, but one. A fourth Part of it given away to Colonel Brett. *A Digreſſion to his Memory. The two Companies of Actors re-united, by his Intereſt, and Menagement. The firſt Direction of Opera's only, given to Mr.* Swiney.

FROM the Time, that the Company of Actors, in the *Hay-Market*, was recruited with thoſe from *Drury-Lane*, and came into the Hands of their new Director, *Swiney*, the Theatre, for three or four Years following, ſuffer'd ſo many Convulſions, and was thrown every other Winter under ſuch different Intereſts, and Menagement, before it came to a firm and laſting Settlement, that I am doubtful, if the moſt candid Reader will have Patience, to go through a full, and fair Account of it: And yet I would fain flatter my ſelf, that thoſe, who are not too wiſe, to frequent the Theatre (or have Wit enough to diſtinguiſh what ſort of Sights there, either do Honour, or Diſgrace to it) may think their national Diverſion no contemptible Subject, for a more able Hiſtorian, than I pretend to be: If I have any particular Qualification, for the Task, more than another, it is that I have been an ocular Witneſs of the ſeveral Facts, that are to fill up the reſt of my Volume; and am, perhaps, the only Perſon living (however unworthy) from whom the ſame Materials can be collected; but let them come from whom they may, whether, at beſt, they will be worth reading; perhaps a Judgment may be better form'd after a patient Peruſal of the following Digreſſion.

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In whatever cold Eſteem, the Stage may be, among the wiſe, and powerful; it is not ſo much a Reproach, to thoſe, who contentedly enjoy it in its loweſt Condition, as that Condition of it, is to thoſe, who (though they cannot but know, to how valuable a publick Uſe, a Theatre, well eſtabliſh'd, might be rais'd) yet in ſo many civiliz'd Nations, have neglected it. This perhaps will be call'd thinking my own wiſer, than all the wiſe Heads, in *Europe.* But I hope a more humble Senſe will be given to it; at leaſt I only mean, that if ſo many Governments have their Reaſons, for their Diſregard of their Theatres, thoſe Reaſons may be deeper, than my Capacity has yet been able to dive into: If therefore my ſimple Opinion is a wrong one, let the Singularity of it expoſe me: And though I am only building a Theatre in the Air, it is there, however, at ſo little Expence, and in ſo much better a Taſte, than any I have yet ſeen, that I cannot help ſaying of it, as a wiſer Man did (it may be) upon a wiſer Occaſion:

---- *Si quid noviſti rectius iſtis,*
Candidus imperti; ſi non ---- Hor.

Give me leave to play, with my Project, in Fancy.

I ſay then, that as I allow nothing is more liable to debaſe, and corrupt the Minds of a People, than a licentious Theatre; ſo under a juſt, and proper Eſtabliſhment, it were poſſible to make it, as apparently the School of Manners, and of Virtue. Were I to collect all the Arguments, that might be given for my Opinion, or to inforce it by exemplary Proofs, it might ſwell this ſhort Digreſſion to a Volume; I ſhall therefore truſt the Validity of what I have laid down, to a ſingle Fact, that may be ſtill freſh, in the Memory of many living Spectators. When the Tragedy of *Cato* was firſt acted, let us call to mind the noble Spirit of Patriotiſm, which that Play then infus'd into the Breaſts of a free People, that crowded to it; with what affecting Force, was that moſt elevated of Human Virtues recommended? Even the

the falſe Pretenders to it felt an unwilling Conviction, and made it a Point of Honour to be foremoſt, in their Approbation; and this too at a time, when the fermented Nation had their different Views of Government. Yet the ſublime Sentiments of Liberty, in that venerable Character, rais'd, in every ſenſible Hearer ſuch conſcious Admiration, ſuch compell'd Aſſent to the Conduct of a ſuffering Virtue, as even *demanded* two almoſt irreconcileable Parties to embrace, and join in their equal Applauſes of it. Now, not to take from the Merit of the Writer, had that Play never come to the Stage, how much of this valuable Effect of it muſt have been loſt? It then could have had no more immediate weight with the Publick, than our poring upon the many ancient Authors, through whoſe Works the ſame Sentiments have been, perhaps, leſs profitably diſpers'd, tho' amongſt Millions of Readers; but by bringing ſuch Sentiments to the Theatre, and into Action, what a ſuperior Luſtre did they ſhine with? There, *Cato* breath'd again, in Life; and tho' he periſh'd in the Cauſe of Liberty, his Virtue was victorious, and left the Triumph of it in the Heart of every melting Spectator. If Effects, like theſe, are laudable; if the Repreſentation of ſuch Plays can carry Conviction with ſo much Pleaſure, to the Underſtanding, have they not vaſtly the Advantage of any other Human Helps to Eloquence? What equal Method can be found to lead, or ſtimulate the Mind, to a quicker Senſe of Truth, and Virtue, or warm a People into the Love, and Practice of ſuch Principles, as might be at once a Defence, and Honour to their Country? In what Shape could we liſten to Virtue with equal Delight, or Appetite of Inſtruction? The Mind of Man is naturally free, and when he is compell'd, or menac'd into any Opinion that he does not readily conceive, he is more apt to doubt the Truth of it, than when his Capacity is led by Delight, into Evidence and Reaſon. To preſerve a Theatre in this Strength, and Purity of Morals, is, I grant, what the wiſeſt Nations, have not been able to perpetuate, or to tranſmit long to their Poſte-

rity: But this Difficulty will rather heighten, than take from the Honour of the Theatre: The greateſt Empires have decay'd, for want of proper Heads to guide them, and the Ruins of them ſometimes have been the Subject of Theatres, that could not be, themſelves exempt, from as various Revolutions: Yet may not the moſt natural Inference from all this be, That the Talents requiſite to form good Actors, great Writers, and true Judges, were like thoſe of wiſe and memorable Miniſters, as well the Gifts of Fortune, as of Nature, and not always to be found, in all Climes or Ages. Or can there be a ſtronger modern Evidence of the Value of Dramatick Performances, than that in many Countries, where the Papal Religion prevails, the Holy Policy (though it allows not to an Actor Chriſtian Burial) is ſo conſcious of the Uſefulneſs of his Art, that it will frequently take in the Aſſiſtance of the Theatre, to give even Sacred Hiſtory, in a Tragedy, a Recommendation to the more pathetick Regard of their People. How can ſuch Principles, in the Face of the World, refuſe the Bones of a Wretch the loweſt Benefit of Chriſtian Charity, after having admitted his Profeſſion (for which they deprive him of that Charity) to ſerve the ſolemn Purpoſes of Religion? How far then is this Religious Inhumanity ſhort of that famous Painter's, who, to make his *Crucifix* a Maſter-piece of Nature, ſtabb'd the innocent Hireling, from whoſe Body he drew it; and having heighten'd the holy Portrait, with his laſt Agonies of Life, then ſent it to be the conſecrated Ornament of an Altar? Though we have only the Authority of common Fame, for this Story, yet be it true, or falſe, the Compariſon will ſtill be juſt. Or let me ask another Queſtion more humanly political.

How came the *Athenians* to lay out an Hundred Thouſand Pounds, upon the Decorations of one ſingle Tragedy of *Sophocles?* Not ſure, as it was merely a Spectacle for Idleneſs, or Vacancy of Thought to gape at, but becauſe it was the moſt rational, moſt inſtructive, and delightful Compoſition, that human Wit had yet arriv'd at; and conſequently the moſt worthy

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to be the Entertainment of a wiſe, and warlike Nation: And it may be ſtill a Queſtion, whether the *Sophocles* inſpir'd this Publick Spirit, or this Publick Spirit inſpir'd the *Sophocles?*

But alas! as the Power of giving, or receiving ſuch Inſpirations, from either of theſe Cauſes, ſeems pretty well at an End; now I have ſhot my Bolt, I ſhall deſcend to talk more like a Man of the Age, I live in: For, indeed, what is all this to a common *Engliſh* Reader? Why truly, as *Shakeſpear* terms it---- *Caviare to the Multitude!* Honeſt *John Trott* will tell you, that if he were to believe what I have ſaid of the *Athenians*, he is at moſt, but aſtoniſh'd at it; but that if the twentieth Part of the Sum I have mention'd were to be apply'd, out of our Publick Money, to the Setting off the beſt Tragedy, the niceſt Noddle in the Nation could produce, it would probably raiſe the Paſſions higher in thoſe that did *Not* like it, than in thoſe that did; it might as likely meet with an Inſurrection, as the Applauſe of the People, and ſo, mayhap, be fitter for the Subject of a Tragedy, than for a Publick Fund to ſupport it. ---- Truly, Mr. *Trott*, I cannot but own, that I am very much of your Opinion: I am only concern'd, that the Theatre has not a better Pretence to the Care and further Conſideration of thoſe Governments, where it is tolerated; but as what I have ſaid will not probably do it any great Harm, I hope I have not put you out of Patience, by throwing a few good Wiſhes after an old Acquaintance.

To conclude this Digreſſion. If, for the Support of the Stage, what is generally ſhewn there, muſt be lower'd to the Taſte of common Spectators; or if it is inconſiſtent with Liberty, to mend that vulgar Taſte, by making the Multitude leſs merry there; or by aboliſhing every low, and ſenſeleſs Jollity, in which the Underſtanding can have no Share; whenever, I ſay, ſuch is the State of the Stage, it will be as often liable, to unanſwerable Cenſure, and manifeſt Diſgraces. Yet there *was* a Time, not yet, out of many People's Memory, when it ſubſiſted upon its

own rational Labours; when even Succeſs attended an Attempt to reduce it to Decency; and when Actors themſelves were hardy enough to hazard their Intereſt, in purſuit of ſo dangerous a Reformation. And this Criſis, I am myſelf as impatient, as any tir'd Reader can be, to arrive at. I ſhall therefore endeavour to lead him the ſhorteſt way to it. But as I am a little jealous of the badneſs of the Road, I muſt reſerve to myſelf the Liberty of calling upon any Matter, in my Way, for a little Refreſhment to whatever Company may have the Curioſity, or Goodneſs, to go along with me.

When the ſole menaging Patentee at *Drury-Lane*, for ſeveral Years could never be perſuaded or driven to any Account with the Adventurers; Sir *Thomas Skipwith* (who, if I am rightly inform'd, had an equal Share with him) grew ſo weary of the Affair, that he actually made a Preſent of his entire Intereſt in it, upon the following Occaſion.

Sir *Thomas* happen'd, in the Summer preceding the Re-union of the Companies, to make a Viſit to an intimate Friend of his, Colonel *Brett*, of *Sandywell*, in *Glouceſterſhire*; where the Pleaſantneſs of the Place, and the agreeable manner of paſſing his Time there, had rais'd him to ſuch a Gallantry of Heart, that, in return to the Civilities of his Friend the Colonel, he made him an Offer of his whole Right in the Patent; but not to overrate the Value of his Preſent, told him, he himſelf had made nothing of it, theſe ten Years: But the Colonel (he ſaid) being a greater Favourite of the People in Power, and (as he believ'd) among the Actors too, than himſelf was, might think of ſome Scheme, to turn it to Advantage, and in that Light, if he lik'd it, it was at his Service. After a great deal of Raillery on both ſides, of what Sir *Thomas* had *not* made of it, and the particular Advantages the Colonel was likely to make of it; they came to a laughing Reſolution, That an Inſtrument ſhould be drawn the next Morning, of an abſolute Conveyance of the Premiſes. A Gentleman of the Law, well known to them both, happening to

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be a Gueſt there, at the ſame time, the next Day produc'd the Deed, according to his Inſtructions, in the Preſence of whom, and of others, it was ſign'd, ſeal'd, and deliver'd, to the Purpoſes therein contain'd.

This Tranſaction may be another Inſtance (as I have elſewhere obſerv'd) at how low a Value, the Intereſts, in a Theatrical Licenſe were then held; tho' it was viſible, from the Succeſs of *Swiney* in that very Year, that with tolerable Menagement, they could, at no time have fail'd of being a profitable Purchaſe.

The next Thing to be conſider'd was, what the Colonel ſhould do with his new Theatrical Commiſſion, which, in another's Poſſeſſion, had been of ſo little Importance. Here it may be neceſſary to premiſe, that this Gentleman was the firſt of any Conſideration, ſince my coming to the Stage, with whom I had contracted a Perſonal Intimacy; which might be the Reaſon, why, in this Debate, my Opinion had ſome weight with him: Of this Intimacy too, I am the more tempted to talk, from the natural Pleaſure of calling back, in Age, the Purſuits, and happy Ardours of Youth long paſt, which, like the Ideas of a delightful Spring, in a Winter's Rumination, are ſometimes equal to the former Enjoyment of them. I ſhall therefore, rather chuſe, in this Place to gratify myſelf, than my Reader, by ſetting the faireſt Side of this Gentleman in view, and by indulging a little conſcious Vanity, in ſhewing how early in Life, I fell into the Poſſeſſion of ſo agreeable a Companion: Whatever Failings he might have to others, he had none to me; nor was he, where he had them, without his valuable Qualities to balance or ſoften them. Let, then, what was not, to be commended in him, reſt with his Aſhes, never to be rak'd into: But the friendly Favours I receiv'd from him, while living, give me ſtill a Pleaſure, in paying this only Mite of my Acknowledgment, in my Power, to his Memory. And if my taking this Liberty, may find Pardon from ſeveral of his fair Relations, ſtill living, for whom I profeſs

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the utmoſt Reſpect, it will give me but little Concern, tho' my critical Readers ſhould think it all Impertinence.

This Gentleman, then, *Henry*, was the eldeſt Son of *Henry Brett*, Eſq; of *Cowley*, in *Glouceſterſhire*, who coming early to his Eſtate of about Two Thouſand a Year, by the uſual Negligences of young Heirs, had, before this his eldſt Son came of age, ſunk it to about half that Value, and that not wholly free from Incumbrances. Mr. *Brett*, whom I am ſpeaking of, had his Education, and I might ſay ended it, at the Univerſity of *Oxford*; for tho' he was ſettled ſome time after at the *Temple*, he ſo little followed the Law there, that his Neglect of it, made the Law (like ſome of his fair and frail Admirers) very often follow *him*. As he had an uncommon Share of Social Wit, and a handſom Perſon, with a ſanguine Bloom in his Complexion, no wonder they perſuaded him, that he might have a better Chance of Fortune, by throwing ſuch Accompliſhments, into the gayer World, than by ſhutting them up, in a Study. The firſt View, that fires the Head of a young Gentleman of this modiſh Ambition, juſt broke looſe, from Buſineſs, is to cut a Figure (as they call it) in a Side-box, at the Play, from whence their next Step is, to the *Green Room* behind the Scenes, ſometimes their *Non ultra*. Hither, at laſt then, in this hopeful Queſt of his Fortune, came this Gentleman-Errant, not doubting but the fickle Dame, while he was thus qualify'd to receive her, might be tempted to fall into his Lap. And though, poſſibly, the Charms of our Theatrical Nymphs might have their Share, in drawing him thither; yet in my Obſervation, the moſt viſible Cauſe of his firſt coming, was a more ſincere Paſſion he had conceiv'd for a fair full-bottom'd Perriwig, which I then wore in my firſt Play of the *Fool in Faſhion*, in the Year 1695. For it is to be noted, that, the *Beaux* of thoſe Days, were of a quite different Caſt, from the modern Stamp, and had more of the Statelineſs of the Peacock in their Mien, than (which now ſeems to be their higheſt Emulation) the pert Air of a Lapwing. Now whatever Contempt

tempt Philoſophers may have, for a fine Perriwig; my Friend, who was not to deſpiſe the World, but to live in it, knew very well, that ſo material an Article of Dreſs, upon the Head of a Man of Senſe, if it became him, could never fail of drawing to him a more partial Regard, and Benevolence, than could poſſibly be hop'd for, in an ill-made one. This perhaps may ſoften the grave Cenſure, which ſo youthful a Purchaſe might otherwiſe, have laid upon him: In a word, he made his Attack upon this Perriwig, as your young Fellows generally do upon a Lady of Pleaſure; firſt, by a few, familiar Praiſes of her Perſon, and then, a civil Enquiry, into the Price of it. But upon his obſerving me a little ſurpriz'd at the Levity of his Queſtion, about a Fop's Perriwig, he began to rally himſelf, with ſo much Wit, and Humour, upon the Folly of his Fondneſs for it, that he ſtruck me, with an equal Deſire of granting any thing, in my Power, to oblige ſo facetious a Cuſtomer. This ſingular Beginning of our Converſation, and the mutual Laughs that enſued upon it, ended in an Agreement, to finiſh our Bargain that Night, over a Bottle.

If it were poſſible, the Relation of the happy Indiſcretions which paſs'd between us that Night, could give the tenth Part of the Pleaſure, I then receiv'd from them, I could ſtill repeat them with Delight: But as it may be doubtful, whether the Patience of a Reader may be quite ſo ſtrong, as the Vanity of an Author, I ſhall cut it ſhort, by only ſaying, That ſingle Bottle was the Sire of many a jolly Dozen, that for ſome Years following, like orderly Children, whenever they were call'd for, came into the ſame Company. Nor indeed, did I think from that time, whenever he was to be had, any Evening could be agreeably enjoy'd without him. But the long continuance of our Intimacy, perhaps, may be thus accounted for.

He who can taſte Wit in another, may, in ſome ſort, be ſaid to have it himſelf: Now, as I always had, and (I bleſs myſelf for the Folly) ſtill have a quick Reliſh of whatever did, or can

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give me Delight: This Gentleman could not but ſee the youthful Joy, I was generally rais'd to, whenever I had the Happineſs of a *Tête à tête* with him; and it may be a moot Point, whether Wit is not as often inſpir'd, by a proper Attention, as by the brighteſt Reply, to it. Therefore as he had Wit enough for any two People, and I had Attention enough for any four, there could not well be wanting a ſociable Delight, on either ſide. And tho' it may be true, that a Man of a handſom Perſon is apt to draw a partial Ear to every thing he ſays; yet this Gentleman ſeldom ſaid any thing, that might not have made a Man of the plaineſt Perſon agreeable. Such a continual Deſire to pleaſe, it may be imagin'd, could not but, ſometimes lead him into a little venial Flattery, rather than not ſucceed in it. And I, perhaps, might be one of thoſe Flies, that was caught in this Honey. As I was, then, a young ſucceſsful Author, and an Actor, in ſome unexpected Favour, whether deſervedly, or not, imports not; yet ſuch Appearances, at leaſt were plauſible Pretences enough, for an amicable Adulation to enlarge upon; and the Sallies of it a leſs Vanity, than mine might not have been able to reſiſt. Whatever this Weakneſs on my ſide might be, I was not alone in it; for I have heard a Gentleman of Condition ſay, who knew the World as well, as moſt Men, that live in it, that let his Diſcretion be ever ſo much upon its guard, he never fell into Mr. *Brett*'s Company, without being loth to leave it, or carrying away a better Opinion of himſelf, from it. If his Converſation had this Effect among the Men; what muſt we ſuppoſe to have been the Conſequence, when he gave it, a yet ſofter turn among the Fair Sex? Here now, a *French* Novelliſt would tell you fifty pretty Lies of him; but as I chuſe to be tender of Secrets of that ſort, I ſhall only borrow the good Breeding of that Language, and tell you, in a Word, that I knew ſeveral Inſtances of his being *un Homme a bonne Fortune.* But though his frequent Succeſſes might generally keep him, from the uſual Diſquiets of a Lover, he knew this was a Life too liquoriſh

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to laſt; and therefore had Reflexion enough, to be govern'd by the Advice of his Friends, to turn theſe his Advantages of Nature to a better uſe.

Among the many Men of Condition, with whom, his Converſation had recommended him, to an Intimacy; Sir *Thomas Skipwith* had taken a particular Inclination to him; and as he had the Advancement of his Fortune, at Heart, introduc'd him, where there was a Lady, who had enough, in her Power, to diſencumber him of the World, and make him every way, eaſy, for Life.

While he was in purſuit of this Affair, which no time was to be loſt in (for the Lady was to be in Town but for three Weeks) I one Day found him idling behind the Scenes, before the Play was begun. Upon ſight of him, I took the uſual Freedom he allow'd me, to rate him roundly, for the Madneſs of not improving every Moment, in his Power, in what was of ſuch conſequence to him. Why are you not (ſaid I) where you know you only ſhould be? If your Deſign ſhould once get Wind, in the Town, the Ill-will of your Enemies, or the Sincerity of the Lady's Friends, may ſoon blow up your Hopes, which, in your Circumſtances of Life, cannot be long ſupported, by the bare Appearance of a Gentleman. ---- But it is impoſſible to proceed, without ſome Apology, for the very familiar Circumſtance, that is to follow. ---- Yet, as it might not be ſo trivial in its Effect, as I fear it may be in the Narration, and is a Mark of that Intimacy, which is neceſſary ſhould be known, had been between us, I will honeſtly make bold with my Scruples, and let the plain Truth of my Story take its Chance for Contempt, or Approbation.

After twenty Excuſes, to clear himſelf of the Neglect, I had ſo warmly charg'd him with, he concluded them, with telling me, he had been out all the Morning, upon Buſineſs, and that his Linnen was too much ſoil'd, to be ſeen in Company. Oh, ho! ſaid I, is that all? Come along with me, we will ſoon get

over that dainty Difficulty: Upon which I haul'd him, by the Sleeve, into my Shifting-Room, he either ſtaring, laughing, or hanging back all the way. There, when I had lock'd him in, I began to ſtrip off my upper Cloaths, and bad him do the ſame; ſtill he either did not, or would not, ſeem to underſtand me, and continuing his Laugh, cry'd, What! is the Puppy mad? No, no, only poſitive, ſaid I; for look you, in ſhort, the Play is ready to begin, and the Parts that you, and I, are to act to Day, are not of equal conſequence; mine of young *Reveller* (in *Greenwich-Park*) is but a Rake; but whatever you may be, you are not to appear ſo; therefore take my Shirt, and give me yours; for depend upon't, ſtay here you ſhall not, and ſo go about your Buſineſs. To conclude, we fairly chang'd Linnen, nor could his Mother's have wrap'd him up more fortunately; for in about ten Days he marry'd the Lady. In a Year or two after his Marriage, he was choſen a Member of that Parliament, which was ſitting, when King *William* dy'd. And, upon the raiſing of ſome new Regiments, was made Lieutenant-Colonel, to that of Sir *Charles Hotham*. But as his Ambition extended not beyond the Bounds of a Park Wall, and a pleaſant Retreat in the Corner of it, which, with too much Expence he had juſt finiſh'd, he, within another Year, had leave to reſign his Company to a younger Brother.

This was the Figure, in Life, he made, when Sir *Thomas Skipwith* thought him the moſt proper Perſon, to oblige (if it could be an Obligation) with the Preſent of his Intereſt in the Patent. And from theſe Anecdotes of my Intimacy with him, it may be leſs a Surpriſe, when he came to Town inveſted with this new Theatrical Power, that I ſhould be the firſt Perſon, to whom he took any Notice of it. And notwithſtanding he knew I was then engag'd, in another Intereſt, at the *Hay-Market*, he deſired we might conſider together, of the beſt Uſe he could make of it, aſſuring me, at the ſame time, he ſhould think it of none to himſelf, unleſs it could in ſome Shape be turn'd to my Advantage.

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This friendly Declaration, though it might be generous in him to make, was not needful, to incline me, in whatever might be honeſtly in my Power, whether by Intereſt or Negotiation, to ſerve him. My firſt Advice, therefore, was, That he ſhould produce his Deed to the other Menaging Patentee of *Drury-Lane*, and demand immediate Entrance to a joint Poſſeſſion of all Effects, and Powers, to which that Deed had given him an equal Title. After which, if he met with no Oppoſition, to this Demand (as upon ſight of it he did not) that he ſhould be watchful againſt any Contradiction, from his Collegue, in whatever he might propoſe, in carrying on the Affair, but to let him ſee, that he was determin'd in all his Meaſures. Yet to heighten that Reſolution, with an Eaſe and Temper in his manner, as if he took it for granted, there could be no Oppoſition made, to whatever he had a mind to. For that this Method, added to his natural Talent of Perſuading, would imperceptibly lead his Collegue, into a Reliance on his ſuperior Underſtanding, That however little he car'd for Buſineſs, he ſhould give himſelf the Air at leaſt, of Enquiry into what *had* been done, that what he intended to do, might be thought more conſiderable, and be the readier comply'd with: For if he once ſuffer'd his Collegue to ſeem wiſer than himſelf, there would be no end of his perplexing him with abſurd, and dilatory Meaſures; direct, and plain Dealing being a Quality his natural Diffidence would never ſuffer him to be Maſter of; of which, his not complying with his Verbal Agreement with *Swiney*, when the *Hay-Market* Houſe was taken for both their Uſes, was an Evidence. And though ſome People thought it Depth, and Policy in him, to keep things often in Confuſion, it was ever my Opinion they over-rated his Skill, and that, in reality his Parts were too weak, for his Poſt, in which he had always acted, to the beſt of his Knowledge. That his late Collegue, Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, had truſted too much to his Capacity, for this ſort of Buſineſs; and was treated by him accordingly, without ever receiving any Profits from it, for ſeveral

Years: Inſomuch that when he found his Intereſt in ſuch deſperate Hands, he thought the beſt thing he could do with it was, (as he ſaw) to give it away. Therefore if he (Mr. *Brett*) could once fix himſelf, as I had advis'd, upon a different Foot with this, hitherto untractable Menager, the Buſineſs would ſoon run through whatever Channel, he might have a mind to lead it. And though I allow'd the greateſt Difficulty he would meet with, would be in getting his Conſent to a Union of the two Companies, which was the only Scheme, that could raiſe the Patent to its former Value, and which, I knew, this cloſe Menager would ſecretly lay all poſſible Rubs in the way to; yet it was viſible, there was a way of reducing him to Compliance: For though, it was true his Caution would never part with a Straw, by way of Conceſſion, yet to a high Hand, he would give up any thing, provided he was ſuffer'd to keep his Title to it: If his Hat were taken from his Head, in the Street, he would make no farther Reſiſtance, than to ſay, *I am not willing to part with it.* Much leſs would he have the Reſolution, openly to oppoſe any juſt Meaſures, when he ſhould find one, who with an equal Right, to his, and with a known Intereſt to bring them about, was reſolv'd to go through with them.

Now though I knew my Friend was as thoroughly acquainted with this Patentee's Temper, as myſelf, yet I thought it not amiſs to quicken and ſupport his Reſolution, by confirming to him, the little Trouble he would meet with, in purſuit of the Union I had advis'd him to; for it muſt be known, that on our ſide, Trouble was a ſort of Phyſick we did not much care to take: But as the Fatigue of this Affair was likely to be lower'd by a good deal of Entertainment, and Humour, which would naturally engage him, in his dealing with ſo exotick a Partner; I knew that this ſoftening the Buſineſs, into a Diverſion, would leſſen every Difficulty, that lay in our way to it.

However copiouſly I may have indulg'd my ſelf in this Commemoration of a Gentleman, with whom I had paſs'd ſo many of

of my younger Days, with Pleaſure, yet the Reader may by this Inſight into his Character, and by that of the other Patentee, be better able to judge of the ſecret Springs, that gave Motion to, or obſtructed ſo conſiderable an Event, as that of the Reunion of the two Companies of Actors in 1708. In Hiſtories of more weight, for want of ſuch Particulars, we are often deceiv'd in the true Cauſes of Facts, that moſt concern us, to be let into; which ſometimes makes us aſcribe to Policy, or falſe Appearances of Wiſdom, what perhaps, in reality, was the mere Effect of Chance, or Humour.

Immediately after Mr. *Brett* was admitted as a joint Patentee, he made uſe of the Intimacy he had with the Vice-Chamberlain to aſſiſt his Scheme of this intended Union, in which he ſo far prevail'd, that it was ſoon after left to the particular Care of the ſame Vice-Chamberlain, to give him all the Aid, and Power, neceſſary to the bringing what he deſired, to Perfection. The Scheme was, to have but one Theatre for Plays, and another for Operas, under ſeparate Intereſts. And this the generality of Spectators, as well as the moſt approv'd Actors, had been ſometime calling for, as the only Expedient to recover the Credit of the Stage, and the valuable Intereſts of its Menagers.

As the Condition of the Comedians at this time, is taken notice of in my *Dedication* of the *Wife's Reſentment*, to the Marquis (now Duke) of *Kent*, and then Lord-Chamberlain, which was publiſh'd above thirty Years ago, when I had no thought of ever troubling the World, with this Theatrical Hiſtory, I ſee no Reaſon, why it may not paſs, as a Voucher of the Facts I am now ſpeaking of; I ſhall therefore give them, in the very Light I then ſaw them. After ſome Acknowledgment for his Lordſhips's Protection of our *(Hay-Market)* Theatre, it is further ſaid ---

" The Stage has, for many Years, 'till of late, groan'd under " the greateſt Diſcouragements, which have been very much, if " not wholly owing to the Miſmenagement of thoſe, that have " aukwardly govern'd it. Great Sums have been ventur'd upon

" empty

" empty Projects, and Hopes of immoderate Gains; and when " thoſe Hopes have fail'd, the Loſs has been tyrannically deducted " out of the Actors Sallary. And if your Lordſhip had not re- " deem'd them --- *This is meant of our being ſuffer'd to come over* " *to* Swiney --- they were very near being wholly laid aſider, or, " at leaſt, the Uſe of their Labour was to be ſwallow'd up, in the " pretended Merit of Singing, and Dancing."

What follows, relates to the Difficulties in dealing with the then impracticable Menager, *viz.*

"--- And though your Lordſhip's Tenderneſs of oppreſſing, is " ſo very juſt, that you have rather ſtaid to convince a Man of " your good Intentions to him, than to do him even a Service " againſt his Will; yet ſince your Lordſhip has ſo happily begun " the Eſtabliſhment of the ſeparate Diverſions, we live in hope, " that the ſame Juſtice, and Reſolution, will ſtill perſuade you, " to go as ſucceſsfully through with it. But while any Man is " ſuffer'd to confound the Induſtry, and Uſe of them, by acting " publickly, in oppoſition, to your Lordſhip's equal Intentions, " under a falſe, and intricate Pretence of not being able to com- " ply with them; the Town is likely to be more entertain'd with " the private Diſſenſions, than the publick Performance of either, " and the Actors, in a perpetual Fear, and Neceſſity of petition- " ing your Lordſhip every Seaſon, for new Relief."

Such was the State of the Stage, immediately preceding the time of Mr. *Brett*'s being admitted a joint Patentee, who, as he ſaw, with clearer Eyes, what was its evident Intereſt, left no proper Meaſures unattempted, to make this, ſo long deſpair'd-of, Union practicable. The moſt apparent Difficulty to be got over, in this Affair, was, what could be done for *Swiney*, in conſideration of his being oblig'd to give up thoſe Actors, whom the Power and Choice of the Lord-Chamberlain, had the Year before, ſet him at the Head of, and by whoſe Menagement, thoſe Actors had found themſelves, in a proſperous Condition. But an Accident, at this time, happily contributed, to make that Mat-

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ter Eaſy. The Inclination of our People of Quality for foreign Operas, had now reach'd the Ears of *Italy*, and the Credit of their Taſte had drawn over from thence, without any more particular Invitation, one of their capital Singers, the famous Signior *Cavaliero Nicolini:* From whoſe Arrival, and the Impatience of the Town, to hear him, it was concluded, that Operas being, now, ſo completely provided, could not fail of Succeſs; and that, by making *Swiney* ſole Director of them, the Profits muſt be an ample Compenſation, for his Reſignation of the Actors. This Matter being thus adjuſted, by *Swiney*'s Acceptance of the Opera only to be perform'd at the *Hay-Market* Houſe; the Actors were all order'd to return to *Drury-Lane*, there to remain (under the Patentees) her Majeſty's only Company of Comedians.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

A ſhort View of the Opera, when firſt divided from the Comedy. Plays recover their Credit. The old Patentee uneaſy at their Succeſs. Why. The Occaſion of Colonel Brett's *throwing up his Share in the Patent. The Conſequences of it. Anecdotes of* Goodman *the Actor. The Rate of favourite Actors, in his Time. The Patentees, by endeavouring to reduce their Price, loſe them all a ſecond time. The principal Comedians return to the* Hay-Market *in Shares with* Swiney. *They alter that Theatre. The original and preſent Form of the Theatre in* Drury-Lane, *compar'd. Operas fall off. The Occaſion of it. Farther Obſervations upon them. The Patentee diſpoſſeſs'd of* Drury-Lane *Theatre. Mr.* Collier, *with a New Licenſe, heads the Remains of that Company.*

PLAYS, and Operas, being thus eſtabliſh'd, upon ſeparate Intereſts, they were now left, to make the beſt of their way, into Favour, by their different Merit. Although the Opera is not a Plant of our Native Growth, nor what our plainer Appetites are fond of, and is of ſo delicate a Nature, that without exceſſive Charge, it cannot live long among us; eſpecially while the niceſt *Connoiſſeurs* in Muſick fall into ſuch various Hereſies in Taſte, every Sect pretending to be the true one: Yet, as it is call'd a Theatrical Entertainment, and by its Alliance, or Neutrality, has more, or leſs affected our Domeſtick Theatre, a ſhort View of its Progreſs may be allow'd a Place in our Hiſtory.

After this new Regulation, the firſt Opera that appear'd, was *Pyrrhus*. Subſcriptions, at that time were not extended, as of late, to the whole Seaſon, but were limited to the firſt Six Days only of a new Opera. The chief Performers, in this, were *Nicolini*,

Nicolini, *Valentini*, and Mrs. *Tofts*; and for the inferior Parts, the beſt that were then to be found. Whatever Praiſes may have been given to the moſt famous Voices, that have been heard ſince *Nicolini*; upon the whole, I cannot but come into the Opinion, that ſtill prevails among ſeveral Perſons of Condition, who are able to give a Reaſon for their liking, that no Singer, ſince his Time, has ſo juſtly, and gracefully acquitted himſelf, in whatever Character he appear'd, as *Nicolini*. At moſt, the Difference between him, and the greateſt Favourite of the Ladies, *Farinelli*, amounted but to this, that he might ſometimes more exquiſitely ſurprize us, but *Nicolini* (by pleaſing the Eye, as well as the Ear) fill'd us with a more various, and *rational* Delight. Whether in this Excellence, he has ſince had any Competitor, perhaps, will be better judg'd, by what the Critical Cenſor of *Great Britain* ſays of him in his 115th *Tatler*, *viz.*

" *Nicolini* ſets off the Character he bears in an Opera, by his " Action, as much as he does the Words of it, by his Voice; " every Limb, and Finger, contributes to the Part he acts, inſo- " much that a deaf Man might go along with him in the Senſe " of it. There is ſcarce a beautiful Poſture, in an old Statue, " which he does not plant himſelf in, as the different Circum- " ſtances of the Story give occaſion for it---- He performs the " moſt ordinary Action, in a manner ſuitable to the Greatneſs " of his Character, and ſhews the Prince, even in the giving of " a Letter, or diſpatching of a Meſſage, *&c.*

His Voice at this firſt Time of being among us, (for he made us a ſecond Viſit when it was impair'd) had all that ſtrong, clear, Sweetneſs of Tone, ſo lately admir'd in *Seneſino*. A blind Man could ſcarce have diſtinguiſh'd them; but in Volubility of Throat, the former had much the Superiority. This ſo excellent Performer's Agreement was Eight Hundred Guineas for the Year, which is but an eighth Part more, than half the Sum, that has ſince been given to ſeveral, that could never totally ſurpaſs him: The Conſequence of which is, that the Loſſes by Operas, for

ſeveral Seaſons, to the End of the Year 1738, have been ſo great, that thoſe Gentlemen of Quality, who laſt undertook the Direction of them, found it ridiculous any longer to entertain the Publick, at ſo extravagant an Expence, while no one particular Perſon thought himſelf oblig'd by it.

Mrs. *Tofts*, who took her firſt Grounds of Muſick here in her own Country, before the *Italian* Taſte had ſo highly prevail'd, was then but an Adept in it: Yet, whatever Defect the faſhionably Skilful might find in her manner, ſhe had, in the general Senſe of her Spectators, Charms that few of the moſt learned Singers ever arrive at. The Beauty of her fine proportion'd Figure, and the exquiſitely ſweet, ſilver Tone of her Voice, with that peculiar, rapid Swiftneſs of her Throat, were Perfections not to be imitated by Art, or Labour. *Valentini* I have already mention'd, therefore need only ſay farther of him, that though he was every way inferior to *Nicolini*, yet as he had the Advantage of giving us our firſt Impreſſion of a good Opera Singer, he had ſtill his Admirers, and was of great Service, in being ſo skilful a Second to his Superior.

Three ſuch excellent Performers, in the ſame kind of Entertainment at once, *England* till this Time had never ſeen: Without any farther Compariſon, then, with the much dearer bought, who have ſucceeded them; their Novelty, at leaſt, was a Charm that drew vaſt Audiences of the fine World after them. *Swiney* their ſole Director was proſperous, and in one Winter, a Gainer by them, of a moderate younger Brother's Fortune. But as Muſick, by ſo profuſe a Diſpenſation of her Beauties, could not always ſupply our dainty Appetites, with equal Variety, nor for ever pleaſe us with the ſame Objects; the Opera, after one luxurious Seaſon, like the fine Wife of a roving Husband, began to loſe its Charms, and every Day diſcovered to our Satiety, Imperfections, which our former Fondneſs had been blind to: But of this I ſhall obſerve more in its Place; in the mean time, let us enquire into the Productions of our native Theatre.

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It may eaſily be conceiv'd, that by this entire Re-union of the two Companies, Plays muſt generally have been perform'd, to a more than uſual Advantage, and Exactneſs: For now every chief Actor, according to his particular Capacity, piqued himſelf upon rectifying thoſe Errors, which during their divided State, were almoſt unavoidable. Such a Choice of Actors added a Richneſs to every good Play, as it was, then, ſerv'd up, to the publick Entertainment: The common People crowded to them, with a more joyous Expectation, and thoſe of the higher Taſte return'd to them, as to old Acquaintances, with new Deſires, after a long Abſence. In a Word, all Parties ſeem'd better pleas'd, but he, who one might imagine had moſt Reaſon to be ſo, the (lately) ſole menaging Patentee. He, indeed ſaw his Power daily mould'ring from his own Hands, into thoſe of Mr. *Brett*; whoſe Gentlemanly manner of making every one's Buſineſs eaſy to him, threw their old Maſter under a Diſregard, which he had not been us'd to, nor could with all his happy Change of Affairs, ſupport. Although this grave Theatrical Miniſter, of whom I have been oblig'd to make ſuch frequent mention, had acquired the Reputation of a moſt profound Politician, by being often incomprehenſible, yet I am not ſure, that his Conduct at this Juncture, gave us not an evident Proof, that he was, like other frail Mortals, more a Slave to his Paſſions, than his Intereſt; for no Creature ever ſeem'd more fond of Power, that ſo little knew how to uſe it, to his Profit and Reputation; otherwiſe he could not poſſibly have been ſo diſcontented, in his ſecure, and proſperous State of the Theatre, as to reſolve, at all Hazards, to deſtroy it. We ſhall now ſee what infallible Meaſures he took, to bring this laudable Scheme to Perfection.

He plainly ſaw, that as this diſagreeable Proſperity was chiefly owing to the Conduct of Mr. *Brett*, there could be no hope of recovering the Stage to its former Confuſion, but by finding ſome effectual Means to make Mr. *Brett* weary of his Charge: The moſt probable he could, for the preſent, think of, in this

Diſtreſs, was to call in the Adventurers (whom for many Years, by his Defence in Law, he had kept out) now to take care of their viſibly improving Intereſts. This fair Appearance of Equity, being known to be his own Propoſal, he rightly gueſs'd would incline theſe Adventurers to form a Majority of Votes on his Side, in all Theatrical Queſtions; and conſequently become a Check upon the Power of Mr. *Brett*, who had ſo viſibly alienated the Hearts of his Theatrical Subjects, and now began to govern without him. When the Adventurers, therefore, were re-admitted to their old Government; after having recommended himſelf to them, by propoſing to make ſome ſmall Dividend of the Profits (though he did not deſign that Jeſt ſhould be repeated) he took care that the Creditors of the Patent, who were, then, no inconſiderable Body, ſhould carry off the every Weeks clear Profits, in proportion to their ſeveral Dues and Demands. This Conduct, ſo ſpeciouſly juſt, he had Hopes would let Mr. *Brett* ſee, that his Share, in the Patent, was not ſo valuable an Acquiſition as, perhaps, he might think it; and probably might make a Man of his Turn to Pleaſure, ſoon weary of the little Profit, and great Plague it gave him. Now, though theſe might be all notable Expedients, yet I cannot ſay they would have wholly contributed to Mr. *Brett*'s quitting his Poſt, had not a Matter of much ſtronger Moment, an unexpected Diſpute between him, and Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, prevail'd with him to lay it down: For in the midſt of this flouriſhing State of the Patent, Mr. *Brett* was ſurpriz'd with a Subpœna into Chancery, from Sir *Thomas Skipwith*, who alledg'd, in his Bill, that the Conveyance he had made of his Intereſt, in the Patent, to Mr. *Brett*, was only intended in Truſt. (Whatever the Intent might be, the Deed it ſelf, which I then read, made no mention of any Truſt whatever.) But whether Mr. *Brett*, as Sir *Thomas* farther aſſerted, had previouſly, or after the Deed was ſign'd, given his Word of Honour, that if he ſhould ever make the Stage turn to any Account, or Profit, he would certainly reſtore it:

That

That indeed, I can ſay nothing to; but be the Deed valid, or void, the Facts that apparently follow'd were, that tho' Mr. *Brett*, in his Anſwer to this Bill, abſolutely deny'd his receiving this Aſſignment, either in Truſt, or upon any limited Condition, of what kind ſoever; yet he made no farther Defence, in the Cauſe. But ſince he found Sir *Thomas* had thought fit, on any Account to ſue for the Reſtitution of it; and Mr. *Brett* being himſelf conſcious, that, as the World knew, he had paid no Conſideration for it; his keeping it might be miſconſtrued, or not favourably ſpoken of; or perhaps finding, tho' the Profits were great, they were conſtantly ſwallow'd up (as has been obſerv'd) by the previous Satisfaction of old Debts, he grew ſo tir'd of the Plague, and Trouble, the whole Affair had given him, and was likely ſtill to engage him in, that in a few Weeks after, he withdrew himſelf, from all Concern with the Theatre, and quietly left Sir *Thomas* to find his better Account in it. And thus ſtood this undecided Right, till upon the Demiſe of Sir *Thomas*, Mr. *Brett* being allow'd the Charges he had been at, in his Attendance, and Proſecution of the Union, reconvey'd this Share of the Patent to Sir *George Skipwith*, the Son, and Heir of Sir *Thomas*.

Our Politician, the old Patentee, having thus fortunately got rid of Mr. *Brett*, who had ſo raſhly brought the Patent once more to be a profitable Tenure, was now again at liberty, to chuſe rather to loſe all, than not to have it all to himſelf.

I have, elſewhere, obſerv'd, that nothing can ſo effectually ſecure the Strength, or contribute to the Proſperity of a good Company, as the Directors of it having always, as near as poſſible, an amicable Underſtanding, with three or four of their beſt Actors, whoſe good, or ill-will, muſt naturally make a wide Difference, in their profitable, or uſeleſs manner of ſerving them: While the Principal are kept reaſonably eaſy, the lower Claſs can never be troubleſome, without hurting themſelves: But when a valuable Actor is hardly treated, the Maſter muſt be a very

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cunning Man, that finds his Account in it. We ſhall now ſee how far Experience will verify this Obſervation.

The Patentees thinking themſelves ſecure, in being reſtor'd to their former abſolute Power, over this, now, only Company, choſe rather to govern it by the Reverſe of the Method I have recommended: For tho' the daily Charge of their united Company amounted not, by a good deal, to what either of the two Companies, now in *Drury-Lane*, or *Covent-Garden*, ſingly, ariſes; they notwithſtanding fell into their former Politicks, of thinking every Shilling taken from a hir'd Actor, ſo much clear Gain to the Proprietor: Many of their People, therefore, were actually, if not injudiciouſly, reduc'd in their Pay, and others given to underſtand, the ſame Fate was deſign'd them, of which laſt Number I, my ſelf, was one, which occurs to my Memory, by the Anſwer I made to one of the Adventurers; who, in Juſtification of their intended Proceeding, told me, that my Sallary, tho' it ſhould be leſs, than it was, by ten Shillings a Week, would ſtill be more than ever *Goodman* had, who was a better Actor, than I could pretend to be: To which I reply'd, This may be true, but then you know, Sir, it is as true, that *Goodman* was forc'd to go upon the High-way for a Livelihood. As this was a known Fact of *Goodman*, my mentioning it, on that Occaſion, I believe, was of Service to me; at leaſt my Sallary was not reduc'd after it. To ſay a Word or two more of *Goodman*, ſo celebrated an Actor, in his Time, perhaps may ſet the Conduct of the Patentees in a clearer Light. Tho' *Goodman* had left the Stage, before I came to it, I had ſome ſlight Acquaintance with him. About the Time of his being expected to be an Evidence againſt Sir *John Fenwick*, in the Aſſaſſination-Plot, in 1696, I happen'd to meet him at Dinner, at Sir *Thomas Skipwith*'s, who as he was an agreeable Companion himſelf, liked *Goodman* for the ſame Quality. Here it was, that *Goodman*, without Diſguiſe, or ſparing himſelf, fell into a laughing Account of

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ſeveral looſe Paſſages of *his* younger Life; as his being expell'd the Univerſity of *Cambridge*, for being one of the hot-headed Sparks, who were concern'd in the cutting, and defacing the Duke of *Monmouth*'s Picture, then Chancellor of that Place. But this Diſgrace, it ſeems, had not diſqualify'd him for the Stage; which, like the Sea-Service, refuſes no Man, for his Morals, that is able-body'd: There, as an Actor, he ſoon grew into a different Reputation; but whatever his Merit might be, the Pay of a hired Hero, in thoſe Days, was ſo very low, that he was forc'd, it ſeems, to take the Air (as he call'd it) and borrow what Mony the firſt Man he met, had about him. But this being his firſt Exploit of that kind, which the Scantineſs of his Theatrical Fortune had reduc'd him to, King *James* was prevail'd upon, to pardon him: Which *Goodman* ſaid, was doing him ſo particular an Honour, that no Man could wonder, if his Acknowledgment had carry'd him, a little farther, than ordinary, into the Intereſt of that Prince: But as he had, lately, been out of Luck, in backing his old Maſter, he had now no way to get home the Life he was out, upon his account, but by being under the ſame Obligations to King *William*.

Another Anecdote of him, tho' not quite ſo diſhonourably enterprizing, which I had from his own Mouth, at a different time, will equally ſhew, to what low Shifts in Life, the poor Proviſion for good Actors, under the early Government of the Patent, reduc'd them. In the younger Days of their Heroiſm, Captain *Griffin*, and *Goodman*, were confin'd by their moderate Sallaries, to the Oeconomy of lying together, in the ſame Bed, and having but one whole Shirt between them: One of them being under the Obligation of a Rendezvous, with a fair Lady, inſiſted upon his wearing it, out of his Turn, which occaſion'd ſo high a Diſpute, that the Combat was immediately demanded, and accordingly their Pretenſions to it, were decided by a fair Tilt upon the Spot, in the Room, where they lay: But whether *Clytus*, or *Alexander* was oblig'd to ſee no Company, till a worſe could

could be waſh'd for him, ſeems not to be a material Point, in their Hiſtory, or to my Purpoſe.

By this Rate of *Goodman*, who, till the Time of his quitting the Stage, never had more, than what is call'd forty Shillings a Week, it may be judg'd, how cheap the Labour of Actors had been formerly; and the Patentees thought it a Folly to continue the higher Price, (which their Diviſions had ſince rais'd them to) now there was but one Market for them; but alas! they had forgot their former fatal Miſtake of ſquabbling with their Actors, in 1695; nor did they make any Allowance for the Changes and Operations of Time, or enough conſider the Intereſt the Actors had in the Lord Chamberlain, on whoſe Protection they might always rely, and whoſe Decrees had been leſs reſtrain'd by Precedent, than thoſe of a Lord Chancellor.

In this miſtaken View of their Intereſt, the Patentees, by treating their Actors as Enemies, really made them ſo: And when once the Maſters of a hired Company think not their Actors Hearts as neceſſary, as their Hands, they cannot be ſaid to have agreed for above half the Work, they are able to do in a Day: Or, if an unexpected Succeſs ſhould, notwithſtanding, make the Profits, in any groſs Diſproportion, greater, than the Wages; the Wages will always have ſomething worſe, than a Murmur, at the Head of them, that will not only meaſure the Merit of the Actor, by the Gains of the Proprietor, but will never naturally be quiet, till every Scheme of getting into Property has been try'd, to make the Servant his own Maſter: And this, as far as Experience can make me judge, will always be, in either of theſe Caſes, the State of our *Engliſh* Theatre. What Truth there may be, in this Obſervation, we are now coming to a Proof of.

To enumerate all the particular Acts of Power, in which the Patentees daily bore hard, upon this, now only Company of Actors, might be as tedious, as unneceſſary; I ſhall therefore come, at once, to their moſt material Grievance, upon which they

they grounded their Complaint to the Lord-Chamberlain, who in the Year following, 1709, took effectual Meaſures for their Relief.

The Patentees obſerving that the Benefit-Plays of the Actors, towards the latter end of the Seaſon, brought the moſt crowded Audiences in the Year; began to think their own Intereſts too much neglected, by theſe partial Favours of the Town, to their Actors; and therefore judg'd, it would not be impolitick, in ſuch wholeſom annual Profits, to have a Fellow-feeling with them. Accordingly, an *Indulto* was laid of one Third, out of the Profits of every Benefit, for the proper Uſe, and Behoof of the Patent. But, that a clear Judgment may be form'd of the Equity, or Hardſhip of this Impoſition, it will be neceſſary to ſhew from whence, and from what Cauſes, the Actors Claim to Benefits originally proceeded.

During the Reign of King *Charles*, an Actor's Benefit had never been heard of. The firſt Indulgence of this Kind, was given to Mrs. *Barry* (as has been formerly obſerved) in King *James*'s Time, in conſideration of the extraordinary Applauſe, that had followed her Performance: But there this Favour reſted, to her alone, 'till after the Diviſion of the only Company in 1695, at which time the Patentees were ſoon reduc'd to pay their Actors, half in good Words, and half in ready Mony. In this precarious Condition, ſome particular Actors (however binding their Agreements might be) were too poor, or too wiſe to go to Law with a Lawyer; and therefore rather choſe to compound their Arrears, for their being admitted to the Chance of having them made up, by the Profits of a Benefit Play. This Expedient had this Conſequence; That the Patentees, tho' their daily Audiences, might, and did ſometimes mend, ſtill kept the ſhort Subſiſtance of their Actors, at a ſtand, and grew more ſteady in their Reſolution ſo to keep them, as they found them leſs apt to mutiny, while their Hopes of being clear'd off, by a

Benefit, were depending. In a Year, or two, theſe Benefits grew ſo advantageous, that they became, at laſt, the chief Article, in every Actor's Agreement.

Now though the Agreements of theſe united Actors, I am ſpeaking of in 1708, were as yet, only Verbal; yet that made no difference in the honeſt Obligation, to keep them: But, as Honour at that time happen'd to have but a looſe hold of their Conſciences, the Patentees rather choſe to give it the ſlip, and went on with their Work without it. No Actor, therefore, could have his Benefit fix'd, 'till he had firſt ſign'd a Paper, ſignifying his voluntary Acceptance of it, upon the, above, Conditions, any Claims from Cuſtom, to the contrary notwithſtanding. Several at firſt refus'd to ſign this Paper; upon which the next in Rank were offer'd on the ſame Conditions, to come before the Refuſers; this ſmart Expedient got ſome few of the fearful the Preference to their Seniors; who at laſt, ſeeing the time was too ſhort for a preſent Remedy, and that they muſt either come into the Boat, or loſe their Tide, were forc'd to comply, with what, they, as yet, ſilently, reſented as the ſevereſt Injury. In this Situation, therefore, they choſe to let the principal Benefits be over, that their Grievances might ſwell into ſome bulk, before they made any Application for Redreſs to the Lord-Chamberlain; who, upon hearing their general Complaint, order'd the Patentees to ſhew cauſe, why their Benefits had been diminiſh'd one Third, contrary to the common Uſage? The Patentees pleaded the ſign'd Agreement, and the Actors Receipts of the other two Thirds, in full Satisfaction. But theſe were prov'd to have been exacted from them, by the Methods already mentioned. They notwithſtanding inſiſt upon them as lawful. But as Law, and Equity do not always agree, they were look'd upon as unjuſt, and arbitrary. Whereupon the Patentees were warn'd at their Peril, to refuſe the Actors full Satisfaction. But here it was thought neceſſary, that Judgment ſhould be for ſome time reſpited,

reſpited, 'till the Actors, who had leave ſo to do, could form a Body ſtrong enough to make the Inclination of the Lord-Chamberlain to relieve them, practicable.

Accordingly *Swiney* (who was then ſole Director of the Opera only) had Permiſſion to enter into a private Treaty, with ſuch of the united Actors in *Drury-Lane*, as might be thought fit to head a Company, under their own Management, and to be Sharers with him in the *Hay-Market*. The Actors choſen for this Charge, were *Wilks*, *Dogget*, Mrs. *Oldfield*, and Myſelf. But, before I proceed, leſt it ſhould ſeem ſurprizing, that neither *Betterton*, Mrs. *Barry*, Mrs. *Bracegirdle*, or *Booth*, were Parties in this Treaty; it muſt be obſerv'd, that *Betterton* was now Seventy-three, and rather choſe, with the Infirmities of Age upon him, to rely on ſuch Sallary, as might be appointed him, than to involve himſelf, in the Cares, and Hurry, that muſt unavoidably attend the Regulation of a new Company. As to the two celebrated Actreſſes I have named, this has been my firſt proper Occaſion of making it known, that they had both quitted the Stage the Year before this Tranſaction was thought of. And *Booth*, as yet, was ſcarce out of his Minority as an Actor, or only in the Promiſe of that Reputation, which in about four or five Years after, he happily arriv'd at. However, at this Juncture, he was not ſo far overlook'd, as not to be offer'd a valuable Addition to his Sallary: But this he declin'd, being, while the Patentees were under this Diſtreſs, as much, if not more, in favour, with their chief Manager, as a Schematiſt, than as an Actor: And indeed he appear'd, to my Judgment, more inclin'd to riſque his Fortune in *Drury-Lane*, where he ſhould have no Rival in Parts, or Power, than on any Terms to embark in the *Hay-Market*; where he was ſure to meet with Opponents in both. However this his Separation from our Intereſt, when our All was at ſtake, afterwards kept his Advancement, to a Share with us, in our more ſucceſsful Days, longer poſtpon'd, than otherwiſe it probably might have been.

When Mrs. *Oldfield* was nominated as a joint Sharer, in our new Agreement to be made with *Swiney*; *Dogget*, who had no Objection to her Merit, inſiſted that our Affairs could never be upon a ſecure Foundation, if there was more, than one Sex admitted to the Management of them. He therefore hop'd, that if we offer'd Mrs. *Oldfield* a *Carte Blanche*, inſtead of a Share, ſhe would not think herſelf ſlighted. This was inſtantly agreed to, and Mrs. *Oldfield* receiv'd it rather as a Favour, than a Diſobligation: Her Demands therefore were Two Hundred Pounds a Year certain, and a Benefit clear of all Charges; which were readily ſign'd to. Her Eaſineſs on this Occaſion, ſome Years after, when our Eſtabliſhment was in Proſperity, made us, with leſs Reluctancy, advance her Two Hundred Pounds, to Three Hundred Guineas *per Annum*, with her uſual Benefit, which upon an Average for ſeveral Years at leaſt, doubled that Sum.

When a ſufficient number of Actors were engag'd, under our Confederacy with *Swiney*, it was then judg'd a proper time, for the Lord-Chamberlain's Power, to operate, which, by lying above a Month dormant, had ſo far recover'd the Patentees, from any Apprehenſions of what might fall upon them, from their late Uſurpations on the Benefits of the Actors, that they began to ſet their Marks, upon thoſe who had diſtinguiſh'd themſelves, in the Application for Redreſs. Several little Diſgraces were put upon them; particularly in the Diſpoſal of Parts, in Plays to be reviv'd, and as viſible a Partiality was ſhewn in the Promotion of thoſe in their Intereſt, though their Endeavours to ſerve them could be of no extraordinary uſe. How often does Hiſtory ſhew us, in the ſame State of Courts, the ſame Politicks have been practis'd? All this while, the other Party were paſſively ſilent; 'till one Day, the Actor who particularly ſolicited their Cauſe, at the Lord-Chamberlain's Office, being ſhewn there the Order ſign'd, for abſolutely ſilencing the Patentees, and ready to be ſerv'd, flew back with the News to his Companions, then at a Rehearſal, in which he had been wanted; when being call'd to his

his Part, and ſomething haſtily queſtion'd by the Patentee, for his Neglect of Buſineſs: This Actor, I ſay, with an erected Look, and a Theatrical Spirit, at once threw off the Mask, and roundly told him ------ *Sir, I have now no more Buſineſs Here, than you have; in half an Hour, you will neither have Actors to command, nor Authority, to employ them.* ---- The Patentee, who though he could not readily comprehend his myſterious manner of Speaking, had juſt a Glimpſe of Terror enough from the Words, to ſoften his Reproof into a cold formal Declaration, That *if he would not do his Work, he ſhould not be paid.*---- But now, to complete the Cataſtrophe of theſe Theatrical Commotions, enters the Meſſenger, with the Order of Silence in his Hand, whom the ſame Actor officiouſly introduc'd, telling the Patentee, that the Gentleman wanted to ſpeak with him, from the Lord-Chamberlain. When the Meſſenger had delivered the Order, the Actor throwing his Head over his Shoulder, towards the Patentee, in the manner of *Shakeſpear*'s *Harry the Eighth* to Cardinal *Wolſey*, cry'd ---- *Read o'er that! and now --- to Breakfaſt, with what Appetite you may.* Though theſe Words might be ſpoken, in too vindictive, and inſulting a manner, to be commended; yet from the Fulneſs of a Heart injuriouſly treated, and now reliev'd by that inſtant Occaſion, why might they not be pardon'd?

The Authority of the Patent now no longer ſubſiſting, all the confederated Actors immediately walk'd out of the Houſe, to which they never return'd, 'till they became themſelves the Tenants, and Maſters of it.

Here agen, we ſee an higher Inſtance of the Authority of a Lord-Chamberlain, than any of thoſe I have elſewhere mentioned: From whence that Power might be deriv'd, as I have already ſaid, I am not Lawyer enough to know; however it is evident that a Lawyer obey'd it, though to his Coſt; which might incline one, to think, that the Law was not clearly againſt it: Be that as it may, ſince the Law has lately made it no longer

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a Queſtion, let us drop the Enquiry, and proceed to the Facts, which follow'd this Order, that ſilenc'd the Patent.

From this laſt injudicious Diſagreement of the Patentees with their principal Actors, and from what they had ſuffered on the ſame Occaſion, in the Diviſion of their only Company in 1695, might we not imagine there was ſomething of Infatuation, in their Management? For though I allow Actors, in general, when they are too much indulg'd, or govern'd by an unſteady Head, to be as unruly a Multitude as Power can be plagued with; yet there is a Medium, which, if cautiouſly obſerved by a candid uſe of Power, making them always know, without feeling their Superior, neither ſuffering their Encroachments, nor invading their Rights, with an immoveable Adherence to the accepted Laws, they are to walk by; ſuch a Regulation, I ſay, has never fail'd, in my Obſervation, to have made them a tractable, and profitable Society. If the Government of a well-eſtabliſh'd Theatre were to be compar'd to that of a Nation; there is no one Act of Policy, or Miſconduct in the one, or the other, in which the Manager might not, in ſome parallel Caſe (laugh, if you pleaſe) be equally applauded, or condemned with the Stateſman. Perhaps this will not be found ſo wild a Conceit, if you look into the 193d *Tatler*, Vol. 4. where the Affairs of the State, and thoſe of the very Stage, which I am now treating of, are, in a Letter from *Downs* the Promptor, compar'd, and with a great deal of Wit, and Humour, ſet upon an equal Foot of Policy. The Letter is ſuppos'd to have been written, in the laſt Change of the Miniſtry in Queen *Anne*'s Time: I will therefore venture, upon the Authority of that Author's Imagination, to carry the Compariſon as high, as it can poſſibly go, and ſay, That as I remember one of our Princes, in the laſt Century, to have loſt his Crown, by too arbitrary a Uſe of his Power, though he knew how fatal the ſame Meaſures had been to his unhappy Father before him; why ſhould we wonder, that the ſame Paſſions taking Poſſeſſion of Men, in lower Life,

Life, by an equally impolitick Uſage of their Theatrical Subjects, ſhould have involved the Patentees, in proportionable Calamities.

During the Vacation, which immediately follow'd the Silence of the Patent, both Parties were at leiſure to form their Schemes for the Winter: For the Patentee would ſtill hold out, notwithſtanding his being ſo miſerably maim'd, or over-match'd: He had no more Regard to Blows, than a blind Cock of the Game; he might be beaten, but would never yield; the Patent was ſtill in his Poſſeſſion, and the Broad-Seal to it viſibly as freſh as ever: Beſides, he had yet ſome Actors in his Service, at a much cheaper Rate than thoſe who had left him, the Sallaries of which laſt now they would not work for him, he was not oblig'd to pay. In this way of thinking, he ſtill kept together ſuch, as had not been invited over to the *Hay-Market*, or had been influenc'd by *Booth*, to follow his Fortune in *Drury-Lane*.

By the Patentee's keeping theſe Remains of his broken Forces together, it is plain, that he imagin'd this Order of Silence, like others of the ſame Kind, would be recall'd of courſe, after a reaſonable time of Obedience had been paid to it: But it ſeems, he had rely'd too much upon former Precedents; nor had his Politicks yet div'd, into the Secret, that the Court Power, with which the Patent had been ſo long, and often at variance, had now a mind to take the publick Diverſions more abſolutely into their own Hands: Not that I have any ſtronger Reaſons for this Conjecture, than that the Patent, never after this Order of Silence, got leave to play during the Queen's Reign. But upon the Acceſſion of his late Majeſty, Power having then a different Aſpect, the Patent found no Difficulty in being permitted to exerciſe its former Authority for acting Plays, *&c.* which, however from this time of their lying ſtill, in 1709, did not happen 'till 1714, and which the old Patentee never liv'd to ſee: For he dy'd about ſix Weeks before the new-built Theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields* was open'd, where the firſt Play acted was the

the *Recruiting Officer*, under the Management of his Heirs, and Succeſſors. But of that Theatre, it is not yet time to give any further Account.

The firſt Point reſolv'd on, by the Comedians now reeſtabliſh'd in the *Hay-Market*, was to alter the Auditory Part of their Theatre; the Inconveniencies of which have been fully enlarg'd upon in a former Chapter. What embarraſs'd them moſt in this Deſign, was, their want of Time to do it in a more complete manner, than it now remains in, otherwiſe they had brought it, to the original Model of that in *Drury-Lane*, only in a larger Proportion, as the wider Walls of it would require; as there are not many Spectators, who may remember what Form the *Drury-Lane* Theatre ſtood in, about forty Years ago, before the old Patentee, to make it hold more Mony, took it in his Head to alter it, it were but Juſtice to lay the original Figure, which Sir *Chriſtopher Wren* firſt gave it, and the Alterations of it, now ſtanding, in a fair Light; that equal Spectators may ſee, if they were at their choice, which of the Structures would incline them to a Preference. But in this Appeal, I only ſpeak to ſuch Spectators as allow a good Play, well acted, to be the moſt valuable Entertainment of the Stage. Whether ſuch Plays (leaving the Skill of the dead, or living Actors equally out of the Queſtion) have been more, or leſs, recommended in their Preſentation, by either of theſe different Forms of that Theatre, is our preſent Matter of Enquiry.

It muſt be obſerv'd then, that the Area, or Platform of the old Stage, projected about four Foot forwarder, in a Semi-oval Figure, parallel to the Benches of the Pit; and that the former, lower Doors of Entrance for the Actors, were brought down between the two foremoſt (and then only) Pilaſters; in the Place of which Doors, now the two Stage-Boxes are fixt. That where the Doors of Entrance now are, there formerly ſtood two additional Side-Wings, in front to a ful Set of Scenes, which had then almoſt a double Effect, in their Loftineſs, and Magnificence.

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By this original Form, the uſual Station of the Actors, in almoſt every Scene, was advanc'd at leaſt ten Foot nearer to the Audience, than they now can be; becauſe, not only from the Stage's being ſhorten'd, in front, but likewiſe from the additional Interpoſition of thoſe Stage-Boxes, the Actors (in reſpect to the Spectators, that fill them) are kept ſo much more backward from the main Audience, than they us'd to be: But when the Actors were in Poſſeſſion of that forwarder Space, to advance upon, the Voice was then more in the Centre of the Houſe, ſo that the moſt diſtant Ear had ſcarce the leaſt Doubt, or Difficulty in hearing what fell from the weakeſt Utterance: All Objects were thus drawn nearer to the Senſe; every painted Scene was ſtronger; every Grand Scene and Dance more extended; every rich, or fine-coloured Habit had a more lively Luſtre: Nor was the minuteſt Motion of a Feature (properly changing with the Paſſion, or Humour it ſuited) ever loſt, as they frequently muſt be in the Obſcurity of too great a Diſtance: And how valuable an Advantage the Facility of hearing diſtinctly, is to every well-acted Scene, every common Spectator is a Judge. A Voice ſcarce rais'd above the Tone of a Whiſper, either in Tenderneſs, Reſignation, innocent Diſtreſs, or Jealouſy, ſuppreſs'd, often have as much concern with the Heart, as the moſt clamorous Paſſions; and when on any of theſe Occaſions, ſuch affecting Speeches are plainly heard, or loſt, how wide is the Difference, from the great or little Satisfaction received from them? To all this a Maſter of a Company may ſay, I now receive Ten Pounds more, than could have been taken formerly, in every full Houſe! Not unlikely. But might not his Houſe be oftner full, if the Auditors were oftner pleas'd? Might not every bad Houſe too, by a Poſſibility of being made every Day better, add as much to one ſide of his Account, as it could take from the other? If what I have ſaid, carries any Truth in it, why might not the original Form of this Theatre be reſtor'd? But let this Digreſſion avail what it may, the Actors now re-

turn'd to the *Hay-Market*, as I have obſerv'd, wanted nothing but length of time to have govern'd their Alteration of that Theatre, by this original Model of *Drury-Lane*, which I have recommended. As their time therefore was ſhort, they made their beſt uſe of it; they did ſomething to it: They contracted its Wideneſs, by three Ranges of Boxes on each Side, and brought down its enormous high Cieling, within ſo proportionable a Compaſs, that it effectually cured thoſe hollow Undulations of the Voice formerly complain'd of. The Remedy had its Effect; their Audiences exceeded their Expectation. There was now no other Theatre open againſt them; they had the Town to themſelves; they were their own Maſters, and the Profits of their Induſtry came into their own Pockets.

Yet with all this fair Weather, the Seaſon of their uninterrupted Proſperity was not yet arriv'd; for the great Expence, and thinner Audiences of the Opera (of which they then were equally Directors) was a conſtant Draw-back upon their Gains, yet not ſo far, but that their Income this Year, was better than in their late Station, at *Drury-Lane*. But by the ſhort Experience we had then had of Operas; by the high Reputation they ſeem'd to have been arriv'd at, the Year before; by their Power of drawing the whole Body of Nobility, as by Enchantment, to their Solemnities; by that Prodigality of Expence, at which they were ſo willing to ſupport them; and from the late extraordinary Profits *Swiney* had made of them; what Mountains did we not hope from this Mole-hill? But alas! the fairy Viſion was vaniſh'd, this bridal Beauty was grown familiar to the general Taſte, and Satiety began to make Excuſes for its want of Appetite: Or what is ſtill ſtronger, its late Admirers now as much valued their Judgment, in being able to find out the Faults of the Performers, as they had before, in diſcovering their Excellencies. The Truth is, that this kind of Entertainment being ſo intirely ſenſual, it had no Poſſibility of getting the better of our Reaſon, but by its Novelty; and that Novelty could never be ſupported

but

but by an annual Change of the beſt Voices, which like the fineſt Flowers, bloom but for a Seaſon, and when that is over, are only dead Noſe-gays. From this Natural Cauſe, we have ſeen within theſe two Years, even *Farinelli* ſinging to an Audience of five and thirty Pounds; and yet, if common Fame may be credited, the ſame Voice, ſo neglected in one Country, has in another had Charms ſufficient to make that Crown ſit eaſy, on the Head of a Monarch, which the Jealouſy of Politicians (who had their Views, in his keeping it) fear'd without ſome ſuch extraordinary Amuſement, his Satiety of Empire might tempt him, a ſecond time, to reſign.

There is too, in the very Species of an *Italian* Singer, ſuch an innate, fantaſtical Pride, and Caprice, that the Government of them (here at leaſt) is almoſt impracticable. This Diſtemper, as we were not ſufficiently warn'd, or appriz'd of, threw our muſical Affairs into Perplexities, we knew not eaſily how to get out of. There is ſcarce a ſenſible Auditor, in the Kingdom, that has not, ſince that Time, had Occaſion to laugh at the ſeveral Inſtances of it: But what is ſtill more ridiculous, theſe coſtly Canary-Birds have ſometimes infeſted the whole Body of our dignified Lovers of Muſick, with the ſame childiſh Animoſities: Ladies have been known to decline their Viſits, upon account of their being of a different muſical Party. *Cæſar*, and *Pompey* made not a warmer Diviſion, in the *Roman* Republick, than thoſe Heroines, their Country Women, the *Fauſtina* and *Cuzzoni* blew up in our Common-wealth, of Academical Muſick, by their implacable Pretenſions to Superiority! And while this Greatneſs of Soul is their unalterable Virtue, it will never be practicable to make two capital Singers of the ſame Sex, do as they ſhould do, in one Opera, at the ſame Time! no, not tho' *England* were to double the Sums it has already thrown after them: For even in their own Country, where an extraordinary Occaſion, has called a greater Number of their beſt, to ſing together, the Miſchief they have made has been proportionable;

an Inſtance of which, if I am rightly inform'd, happen'd at *Parma*, where upon the Celebration of the Marriage of that Duke, a Collection was made of the moſt eminent Voices, that Expence, or Intereſt could Purchaſe, to give as complete an Opera, as the whole vocal Power of *Italy* could form. But when it came to the Proof of this muſical Project, behold! what woeful Work they made of it! Every Performer would be a *Cæſar*, or nothing; their ſeveral Pretenſions to Preference were not to be limited within the Laws of Harmony; they would all chuſe their own Songs, but not more to ſet off themſelves, than to oppoſe, or deprive another of an Occaſion to ſhine: Yet any one would ſing a bad Song, provided no body elſe had a good one, till at laſt, they were thrown together like ſo many feather'd Warriors, for a Battle-royal, in a Cock-pit, where every one was oblig'd to kill another, to ſave himſelf! What Pity it was theſe froward Miſſes, and Maſters of Muſick had not been engag'd to entertain the Court of ſome King of *Morocco*, that could have known a good Opera, from a bad one! with how much Eaſe would ſuch a Director have brought them to better Order? But alas! as it has been ſaid of greater Things,

Suis et ipſa Roma viribus ruit. Hor.

Imperial *Rome* fell, by the too great Strength of its own Citizens! So fell this mighty Opera, ruin'd by the too great Excellency of its Singers! For, upon the whole, it prov'd to be as barbarouſly bad, as if Malice it ſelf had compos'd it.

Now though ſomething of this kind, equally provoking, has generally embarraſs'd the State of Operas, theſe thirty Years; yet it was the Misfortune of the menaging Actors, at the *Hay-Market*, to have felt the firſt Effects of it: The Honour of the Singer, and the Intereſt of the Undertaker were ſo often at Variance, that the latter began to have but a bad Bargain of it. But not to impute more to the Caprice of thoſe Performers, than was really true, there were two different Accidents, that drew Numbers

bers from our Audiences, before the Seaſon was ended; which were another Company permitted to act in *Drury-Lane*, and the long Trial of Doctor *Sacheverel*, in *Weſtminſter-Hall*: By the way, it muſt be obſerv'd, that this Company was not under the Direction of the Patent (which continued ſtill ſilenc'd) but was ſet up by a third Intereſt, with a Licenſe from Court. The Perſon to whom this new Licenſe was granted, was *William Collier*, Eſq; a Lawyer of an enterprizing Head, and a jovial Heart; what ſort of Favour he was in, with the People, then, in Power, may be judg'd, from his being often admitted to partake with them thoſe detach'd Hours of Life, when Buſineſs was to give way to Pleaſure: But this was not all his Merit, he was, at the ſame time, a Member of Parliament for *Truro* in *Cornwall*, and we cannot ſuppoſe a Perſon ſo qualified could be refus'd ſuch a Trifle, as a Licenſe to head a broken Company of Actors. This ſagacious Lawyer, then, who had a Lawyer to deal with, obſerving that his Antagoniſt kept Poſſeſſion of a Theatre, without making uſe of it, and for which he was not oblig'd to pay Rent, unleſs he actually *did* uſe it, wiſely conceiv'd it might be the Intereſt of the joint Landlords, ſince their Tenement was in ſo precarious a Condition, to grant a Leaſe to one, who had an undiſputed Authority, to be liable, by acting Plays in it, to pay the Rent of it; eſpecially when he tempted them with an Offer of raiſing it from three, to four Pounds *per Diem*. His Project ſucceeded, the Leaſe was ſign'd; but the Means of getting into Poſſeſſion were to be left to his own Coſt, and Diſcretion. This took him up but little Time, he immediately laid Siege to it, with a ſufficient Number of Forces, whether lawleſs, or lawful, I forget, but they were ſuch as oblig'd the old Governor to give it up; who, notwithſtanding had got Intelligence of his Approaches, and Deſign, time enough to carry off every thing, that was worth moving, except a great Number of old Scenes, and new Actors, that could not eaſily follow him.

A ludi-

A ludicrous Account of this Tranſaction, under fictitious Names, may be found in the 99th *Tatler*, Vol. 2. which this Explanation may now render more intelligible, to the Readers of that agreeable Author.

This other new Licenſe being now in Poſſeſſion of the *Drury-Lane* Theatre; thoſe Actors, whom the Patentee, ever ſince the Order of Silence, had retain'd in a State of Inaction, all to a Man came over to the Service of *Collier*. Of theſe, *Booth* was then the chief. The Merit of the reſt had as yet made no conſiderable Appearance, and as the Patentee had not left a Rag of their Cloathing behind him, they were but poorly equip'd for a publick Review; conſequently at their firſt Opening, they were very little able to annoy us. But during the Trial of *Sacheverel*, our Audiences were extremely weaken'd, by the better Rank of People's daily attending it: While, at the ſame time, the lower Sort, who were not equally admitted to that grand Spectacle, as eagerly crowded into *Drury-Lane*, to a new Comedy, called *The fair Quaker of Deal*. This Play, having ſome low Strokes of natural Humour in it, was rightly calculated, for the Capacity of the Actors, who play'd it, and to the Taſte of the Multitude, who were now, more diſpos'd, and at leiſure to ſee it: But the moſt happy Incident, in its Fortune, was the Charm of the fair Quaker, which was acted by Miſs *Santlow*, (afterwards Mrs. *Booth)* whoſe Perſon was then in the full Bloom of what Beauty ſhe might pretend to: Before this, ſhe had only been admired as the moſt excellent Dancer; which, perhaps, might not a little contribute to the favourable Reception, ſhe now met with as an Actreſs, in this Character, which ſo happily ſuited her Figure, and Capacity: The gentle Softneſs of her Voice, the compos'd Innocence of her Aſpect, the Modeſty of her Dreſs, the reſerv'd Decency of her Geſture, and the Simplicity of the Sentiments, that naturally fell from her, made her ſeem the amiable Maid ſhe repreſented: In a Word, not the enthuſiaſtick Maid of *Orleans*, was more ſerviceable of old, to the *French* Army,

Army, when the *Engliſh* had diſtreſs'd them, than this fair Quaker was, at the Head of that dramatick Attempt, upon which the Support of their weak Society depended.

But when the Trial, I have mention'd, and the Run of this Play was over, the Tide of the Town beginning to turn again in our Favour, *Collier* was reduc'd to give his Theatrical Affairs a different Scheme; which advanc'd the Stage another Step towards that Settlement, which, in my Time, was of the longeſt Duration.

CHAP. XIII.

The Patentee, having now no Actors, rebuilds the new Theatre in Lincolns-Inn-Fields. *A Gueſs at his Reaſons for it. More Changes, in the State of the Stage. The Beginning of its better Days, under the* Triumvirate *of Actors. A Sketch of their governing Characters.*

AS coarſe Mothers may have comely Children; ſo Anarchy has been the Parent of many a good Government; and by a Parity of poſſible Conſequences we ſhall find, that from the frequent Convulſions of the Stage, aroſe, at laſt, its longeſt Settlement, and Proſperity; which many of my Readers (or if I ſhould happen to have but few of them, many of my Spectators, at leaſt) who, I hope, have not yet liv'd half their Time, will be able to remember.

Though the Patent had been often under Diſtreſſes, it had never felt any Blow, equal to this unrevoked Order of Silence; which it is not eaſy to conceive could have fallen upon any other Perſon's Conduct, than that of the old Patentee: For if he was conſcious, of his being under the Subjection of that Power, which

which had ſilenc'd him, why would he incur the Danger of a Suſpenſion, by his ſo obſtinate, and impolitick Treatment of his Actors? If he thought ſuch Power over him illegal, how came he to obey it now, more than before, when he ſlighted a former Order, that injoin'd him to give his Actors their Benefits, on their uſual Conditions? But to do him Juſtice, the ſame Obſtinacy, that involv'd him, in theſe Difficulties, at laſt, preſerv'd to his Heirs the Property of the Patent, in its full Force, and Value; yet to ſuppoſe that he foreſaw a milder uſe of Power, in ſome future Prince's Reign, might be more favourable to him, is begging at beſt but a cold Queſtion. But whether he knew that this broken Condition of the Patent would not make his troubleſome Friends, the Adventurers, fly from it, as from a falling Houſe, ſeems not ſo difficult a Queſtion. However, let the Reader form his own Judgment of them, from the Facts, that follow'd: It muſt therefore be obſerv'd, that the Adventurers ſeldom came near the Houſe, but when there was ſome viſible Appearance of a Dividend: But I could never hear, that upon an ill Run of Audiences, they had ever returned, or brought in a ſingle Shilling, to make good the Deficiencies of their daily Receipts. Therefore, as the Patentee, in Poſſeſſion, had alone, for ſeveral Years, ſupported, and ſtood againſt this Uncertainty of Fortune, it may be imagin'd, that his Accounts were under ſo voluminous a Perplexity, that few of thoſe Adventurers would have Leiſure, or Capacity enough to unravel them: And as they had formerly thrown away their Time, and Mony at Law, in a fruitleſs Enquiry into them, they now ſeem'd to have intirely given up their Right and Intereſt: And, according to my beſt Information, notwithſtanding the ſubſequent Gains of the Patent have been ſometimes extraordinary, the farther Demands, or Claims of Right, of the Adventurers have lain dormant, above theſe five and twenty Years.

Having ſhewn by what means *Collier* had diſpoſſeſs'd this Patentee, not only of the *Drury-Lane* Houſe, but likewiſe of thoſe

few

few Actors, which he had kept, for ſome time unemploy'd in it; we are now led to conſider another Project of the ſame Patentee, which, if we are to judge of by the Event, has ſhewn him more a Wiſe, than a Weak Man; which I confeſs, at the time he put it in Execution, ſeem'd not ſo clear a Point: For notwithſtanding he now ſaw the Authority, and Power of his Patent was ſuperſeded, or was at beſt but precarious, and that he had not one Actor left, in his Service; yet under all theſe Dilemmas, and Diſtreſſes, he reſolv'd upon rebuilding the New Theatre in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*, of which he had taken a Leaſe, at a low Rent, ever ſince *Betterton*'s Company had firſt left it. This Conduct ſeem'd too deep for my Comprehenſion! What are we to think of his taking this Leaſe, in the height of his Proſperity, when he could have no Occaſion for it? Was he a Prophet? Could he then foreſee, he ſhould, one time or other, be turn'd out of *Drury-Lane?* Or did his mere Appetite of Architecture urge him to build a Houſe, while he could not be ſure, he ſhould ever have leave to make uſe of it? But of all this, we may think as we pleaſe; whatever was his Motive, he, at his own Expence, in this Interval of his having nothing elſe to do, rebuilt that Theatre from the Ground, as it is now ſtanding. As for the Order of Silence, he ſeem'd little concern'd at it, while it gave him ſo much uninterrupted Leiſure to ſuperviſe a Work, which he naturally took Delight in.

After this Defeat of the Patentee, the Theatrical Forces of *Collier* in *Drury-Lane*, notwithſtanding their having drawn the Multitude after them, for about three Weeks, during the Trial of *Sacheverel*, had made but an indifferent Campaign, at the end of the Seaſon. *Collier*, at leaſt, found ſo little Account in it, that it oblig'd him to puſh his Court-Intereſt (which, wherever the Stage was concern'd, was not inconſiderable) to ſupport him in another Scheme; which was, that in conſideration of his giving up the *Drury-Lane*, Cloaths, Scenes, and Actors, to *Swiney*, and his joint Sharers, in the *Hay-Market*, he (*Collier*) might be

put into an equal Poſſeſſion of the *Hay-Market* Theatre, with all the Singers, *&c.* and be made ſole Director of the Opera. Accordingly, by Permiſſion of the Lord-Chamberlain, a Treaty was enter'd into, and in a few Days ratified by all Parties, conformable to the ſaid Preliminaries. This was that happy Criſis of Theatrical Liberty, which the labouring Comedians had long ſigh'd for; and which, for above twenty Years following, was ſo memorably fortunate to them.

However, there were two hard Articles, in this Treaty, which though it might be Policy in the Actors to comply with, yet the Impoſition of them ſeem'd little leſs deſpotick, than a Tax upon the Poor, when a Government did not want it.

The firſt of theſe Articles was, That whereas the ſole Licenſe for acting Plays, was preſum'd to be a more profitable Authority, than that for acting Operas only; that therefore Two Hundred Pounds a Year ſhould be paid to *Collier*, while Maſter of the Opera, by the Comedians; to whom a Verbal Aſſurance was given by the *Plenipo*'s on the Court-ſide, that while ſuch Payment ſubſiſted, no other Company ſhould be permitted to act Plays, againſt them, within the Liberties, *&c.* The other Article was, That on every *Wedneſday*, whereon an Opera could be perform'd, the Plays ſhould, *toties quoties*, be ſilent at *Drury-Lane*, to give the Opera a fairer Chance, for a full Houſe.

This laſt Article, however partial, in the Intention, was in its Effect, of great Advantage to the ſharing Actors: For in all publick Entertainments, a Day's Abſtinence naturally increaſes the Appetite to them: Our every *Thurſday*'s Audience, therefore, was viſibly the better, by thus making the Day before it a Faſt. But as this was not a Favour deſign'd us, this Prohibition of a Day, methinks, deſerves a little farther Notice; becauſe it evidently took a ſixth Part of their Income, from all the hired Actors, who were only paid, in proportion to the Number of acting Days. This extraordinary Regard to Operas, was in effect making the Day-labouring Actors the principal Subſcribers to them,

them, and the ſhutting out People from the Play every *Wedneſday*, many murmured at, as an Abridgment of their uſual Liberty. And tho' I was one of thoſe, who profited by that Order, it ought not to bribe me, into a Concealment of what was then ſaid and thought of it. I remember a Nobleman of the firſt Rank, then in a high Poſt, and not out of Court-Favour, ſaid openly behind the Scenes ---- *It was ſhameful to take part of the Actors Bread from them to ſupport the ſilly Diverſion of People of Quality.* But alas! what was all this Grievance, when weighed againſt the Qualifications of ſo grave, and ſtanch a Senator, as *Collier?* Such viſible Merit, it ſeems, was to be made eaſy, tho' at the Expence of the --- I had almoſt ſaid, *Honour* of the Court, whoſe gracious Intention for the Theatrical Commonwealth, might have ſhone with thrice the Luſtre, if ſuch a paltry Price had not been paid for it. But as the Government of the Stage, is but that of the World in Miniature, we ought not to have wondered, that *Collier* had Intereſt enough to quarter the Weakneſs of the Opera, upon the Strength of the Comedy. General good Intentions are not always practicable to a Perfection. The moſt neceſſary Law can hardly paſs, but a Tenderneſs to ſome private Intereſt, ſhall often hang ſuch Exceptions upon particular Clauſes, 'till at laſt it comes out lame, and lifeleſs, with the Loſs of half its Force, Purpoſe, and Dignity. As for inſtance; how many fruitleſs Motions have been made in Parliaments, to moderate the enormous Exactions, in the Practice of the Law? And what ſort of Juſtice muſt that be call'd, which, when a Man has not a mind to pay you a Debt of Ten Pounds, it ſhall coſt you Fifty, before you can get it? How long too, has the Publick been labouring for a Bridge at *Weſtminſter?* But the Wonder, that it was not built a Hundred Years ago ceaſes, when we are told, That the Fear of making one End of *London*, as rich, as the other, has been, ſo long, an Obſtruction to it: And tho' it might ſeem a ſtill greater Wonder, when a new Law for building one had at laſt got over that Apprehenſion, that it

ſhould meet with any farther Delay; yet Experience has ſhewn us, that the Structure of this uſeful Ornament to our Metropolis has been ſo clogg'd by private Jobs, that were to be pick'd out of the Undertaking, and the Progreſs of the Work ſo diſconcerted by a tedious Contention of Private Intereſts, and Endeavours to impoſe upon the Publick abominable Bargains, that a whole Year was loſt, before a ſingle Stone could be laid to its Foundation. But Poſterity will owe its Praiſes, to the Zeal, and Reſolution of a truly Noble Commiſſioner, whoſe diſtinguiſh'd Impatience has broke thro' thoſe narrow Artifices, thoſe falſe and frivolous Objections, that delay'd it, and has already began to raiſe, above the Tide, that future Monument of his Publick Spirit.

How far all this may be allow'd applicable to the State of the Stage, is not of ſo great Importance, nor ſo much my Concern, as that what is obſerv'd upon it ſhould always remain a memorable Truth, to the Honour of that Nobleman. But now I go on: *Collier* being thus poſſeſs'd of his Muſical Government, thought his beſt way would be to farm it out to a Gentleman, *Aaron Hill*, Eſq; (who, he had reaſon to ſuppoſe, knew ſomething more of Theatrical Matters, than himſelf) at a Rent, if I miſtake not, of Six Hundred Pounds *per Annum*: But before the Seaſon was ended (upon what occaſion, if I could remember, it might not be material to ſay) took it into his Hands again: But all his Skill, and Intereſt, could not raiſe the Direction of the Opera, to ſo good a Poſt, as he thought due to a Perſon of his Conſideration: He therefore, the Year following, enter'd upon another high-handed Scheme, which, 'till the Demiſe of the Queen, turn'd to his better Account.

After the Comedians were in Poſſeſſion of *Drury-Lane*, from whence, during my time upon the Stage, they never departed; their Swarm of Audiences exceeded all that had been ſeen, in thirty Years before; which, however, I do not impute ſo much to the Excellence of their Acting, as to their indefatigable Induſtry,

duſtry, and good Management; for as I have often ſaid, I never thought, in the general, that we ſtood in any Place of Compariſon with the eminent Actors before us; perhaps too, by there being now an End of the frequent Diviſions, and Diſorders, that had from time to time broke in upon, and fruſtrated their Labours, not a little might be contributed to their Succeſs.

Collier, then, like a true liquoriſh Courtier, obſerving the Proſperity of a Theatre, which he, the Year before had parted with for a worſe, began to meditate an Exchange of Theatrical Poſts with *Swiney*, who had viſibly very fair Pretenſions to that he was in, by his being firſt choſen, by the Court, to regulate, and reſcue the Stage from the Diſorders it had ſuffer'd, under its former Menagers: Yet *Collier* knew that ſort of Merit could ſtand in no Competition, with his being a Member of Parliament: He therefore had Recourſe to his Court-Intereſt (where meer Will, and Pleaſure, at that time, was the only Law, that diſpos'd of all Theatrical Rights) to oblige *Swiney* to let him be off, from his bad Bargain, for a better. To this, it may be imagin'd *Swiney* demurr'd, and as he had Reaſon, ſtrongly remonſtrated againſt it: But as *Collier* has liſted his Conſcience under the Command of Intereſt, he kept it to ſtrict Duty, and was immoveable; inſomuch that Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who was a Friend to *Swiney*, and who by his Intimacy with the People in Power, better knew the Motive of their Actions, advis'd *Swiney* rather to accept of the Change, than by a Non-compliance to hazard his being excluded from any Poſt, or Concern in either of the Theatres: To conclude, it was not long before *Collier* had procured a new Licenſe for acting Plays, *&c.* for himſelf, *Wilks*, *Dogget*, and *Cibber*, excluſive of *Swiney*, who by this new Regulation was reduc'd to his *Hobſon*'s Choice of the Opera.

Swiney being thus transferr'd to the Opera, in the ſinking Condition *Collier* had left it, found the Receipts of it, in the Winter following 1711, ſo far ſhort of the Expences, that he was driven

to

to attend his Fortune in ſome more favourable Climate, where he remain'd twenty Years an Exile, from his Friends, and Country; tho' there has been ſcarce an *Engliſh* Gentleman, who in his *Tour* of *France*, or *Italy*, has not renew'd, or created an Acquaintance with him. As this is a Circumſtance, that many People may have forgot, I cannot remember it, without that Regard, and Concern it deſerves from all that know him: Yet it is ſome Mitigation of his Misfortune, that ſince his Return to *England*, his grey Hairs, and cheerful Diſpoſition have ſtill found a general Welcome among his foreign, and former domeſtick Acquaintance.

Collier being now, firſt-commiſſion'd Menager with the Comedians, drove them too, to the laſt Inch of a hard Bargain (the natural Conſequence of all Treaties between Power, and Neceſſity) He not only demanded ſix hundred a Year, neat Mony, the Price at which he had farm'd out his Opera, and to make the Buſineſs a *fine Cure* to him; but likewiſe inſiſted, upon a Moiety of the two hundred, that had been levied upon us the Year before, in Aid of the Operas; in all 700 *l.* Theſe large, and ample Conditions, conſidering in what Hands we were, we reſolv'd to ſwallow without wry Faces; rather chuſing to run any Hazard, than contend with a formidable Power, againſt which we had no Remedy: But ſo it happen'd, that Fortune took better Care of our Intereſt, than we ourſelves had like to have done: For had *Collier* accepted of our firſt Offer, of an equal Share with us, he had got three hundred Pounds a Year more, by complying with it, than by the Sum he impoſed upon us; our Shares being never leſs, than a thouſand annually, to each of us, till the End of the Queen's Reign, in 1714. After which *Collier*'s Commiſſion was ſuperſeded; his Theatrical Poſt, upon the Acceſſion of his late Majeſty, being given to Sir *Richard Steele.*

From theſe various Revolutions, in the Government of the Theatre, all owing to the Patentees miſtaken Principle of increaſing their Profits, by too far enſlaving their People, and keeping down

down the Price of good Actors (and I could almoſt inſiſt, that giving large Sallaries to bad Ones, could not have had a worſe Conſequence) I ſay, when it is conſider'd, that the Authority for acting Plays, *&c.* was thought of ſo little worth, that (as has been obſerv'd) Sir *Thomas Skipwith* gave away his Share of it, and the Adventurers had fled from it; that Mr. *Congreve*, at another time, had voluntarily reſign'd it; and Sir *John Vanbrugh* (meerly to get the Rent of his new Houſe paid) had, by Leave of the Court, farm'd out his Licenſe, to *Swiney*, who not without ſome Heſitation had ventur'd upon it; let me ſay again, out of this low Condition of the Theatre, was it not owing to the Induſtry of three, or four Comedians, that a new Place was now created for the Crown to give away, without any Expence attending it, well worth the Acceptance of any Gentleman, whoſe Merit, or Services had no higher Claim to Preferment, and which *Collier*, and Sir *Richard Steele*, in the two laſt Reigns, ſucceſſively enjoy'd? Though, I believe, I may have ſaid ſomething like this, in a former Chapter, I am not unwilling it ſhould be twice taken notice of.

We are now come to that firm Eſtabliſhment of the Theatre, which except the Admittance of *Booth* into a Share, and *Dogget*'s retiring from it, met with no Change, or Alteration, for above twenty Years after.

Collier, as has been ſaid, having accepted of a certain Appointment of ſeven hundred *per Annum*; *Wilks*, *Dogget*, and Myſelf were now the only acting Menagers, under the Queen's Licenſe; which being a Grant, but during Pleaſure, oblig'd us to a Conduct that might not undeſerve that Favour. At this Time we were All in the Vigour of our Capacities as Actors; and our Proſperity enabled us, to pay, at leaſt, double the Sallaries, to what the ſame Actors had uſually receiv'd, or could have hoped for under the Government of the Patentees. *Dogget*, who was naturally an Oeconomiſt, kept our Expences, and Accounts to the beſt of his Power, within regulated Bounds, and Moderation.

tion. *Wilks*, who had a ſtronger Paſſion, for Glory, than Lucre, was a little apt to be laviſh, in what was not always as neceſſary for the Profit, as the Honour of the Theatre: For Example, at the Beginning of almoſt every Seaſon, he would order two, or three Suits to be made, or refreſh'd, for Actors of moderate Conſequence, that his having conſtantly a new one for himſelf, might ſeem leſs particular, tho' he had, as yet, no new Part for it. This expeditious Care of doing us good, without waiting for our Conſent to it, *Dogget* always look'd upon, with the Eye of a Man, in Pain: But I, who hated Pain, (tho' I as little liked the Favour, as *Dogget* himſelf) rather choſe to laugh at the Circumſtance, than complain of what I knew was not to be cured, but by a Remedy, worſe than the Evil. Upon theſe Occaſions, therefore, whenever I ſaw him, and his Followers ſo prettily dreſs'd out, for an old Play, I only commended his Fancy; or at moſt but whiſper'd him not to give himſelf ſo much Trouble, about others, upon whoſe Performance it would but be thrown away: To which, with a ſmiling Air of Triumph, over my want of Penetration, he has reply'd--- Why, now, that was what I really did it for! to ſhew others, that I love to take Care of them, as well as of myſelf. Thus whenever he made himſelf eaſy, he had not the leaſt Conception, let the Expence be what it would, that we could poſſibly diſlike it. And from the ſame Principle, provided a thinner Audience were liberal of their Applauſe, he gave himſelf little Concern about the Receipt of it. As in theſe different Tempers of my Brother-Menagers, there might be equally ſomething right, and wrong, it was equally my Buſineſs to keep well with them both: And tho' of the two, I was rather inclin'd to *Dogget*'s way of thinking, yet I was always under the diſagreeable Reſtraint of not letting *Wilks* ſee it: Therefore, when in any material Point of Menagement, they were ready to come to a Rupture, I found it adviſeable to think neither of them, abſolutely in the wrong; but by giving to one as much of the Right, in his Opinion this way, as I took from the other

other in that; their Differences were ſometimes ſoft'ned into Conceſſions, that I have Reaſon to think prevented many ill Conſequences, in our Affairs, that otherwiſe might have attended them. But this was always to be done with a very gentle Hand; for as *Wilks* was apt to be eaſily hurt, by Oppoſition, ſo when he felt it he was as apt to be inſupportable. However, there were ſome Points, in which we were always unanimous. In the twenty Years, while we were our own Directors, we never had a Creditor that had Occaſion to come twice for his Bill; every *Monday* Morning diſcharged us of all Demands, before we took a Shilling for our own Uſe. And from this Time, we neither ask'd any Actor, nor were deſired by them, to ſign any written Agreement (to the beſt of my Memory) whatſoever: The Rate of their reſpective Sallaries were only enter'd in our daily Pay-Roll; which plain Record every one look'd upon, as good as City-Security: For where an honeſt Meaning is mutual, the mutual Confidence will be Bond enough, in Conſcience, on both ſides: But that I may not aſcribe more to our Conduct than was really its Due, I ought to give Fortune her Share of the Commendation; for had not our Succeſs exceeded our Expectation, it might not have been in our Power, ſo throughly to have obſerv'd thoſe laudable Rules of Oeconomy, Juſtice, and Lenity, which ſo happily ſupported us: But the Severities, and Oppreſſion we had ſuffer'd under our former Maſters, made us incapable of impoſing them upon others; which gave our whole Society the cheerful Looks of a reſcued People. But notwithſtanding this general Cauſe of Content, it was not above a Year or two before the Imperfection of human Nature began to ſhew itſelf in contrary Symptoms. The Merit of the Hazards which the Menagers had run, and the Difficulties they had combated, in bringing to Perfection, that Revolution, by which they had all ſo amply profited, in the Amendment of their general Income, began now to be forgotten; their Acknowledgments, and thankful Promiſes of Fidelity, were no more repeated, or ſcarce

thought obligatory: Eaſe and Plenty, by an habitual Enjoyment, had loſt their Novelty, and the Largeneſs of their Sallaries, ſeem'd rather leſſen'd than advanc'd, by the extraordinary Gains of the Undertakers; for that is the Scale, in which the hired Actor will always weigh his Performance; but whatever Reaſon there may ſeem to be, in his Caſe, yet as he is frequently apt to throw a little Self-partiality into the Balance, that Conſideration may a good deal alter the Juſtneſs of it. While the Actors, therefore, had this way of thinking, happy was it, for the Menagers, that their united Intereſt was ſo inſeparably the ſame, and that their Skill and Power in Acting, ſtood in a Rank ſo far above the reſt, that if the whole Body of private Men had deſerted them, it would yet have been an eaſier Matter, for the Menagers to have pick'd up Recruits, than for the Deſerters to have found proper Officers to head them. Here, then, in this Diſtinction lay our Security: Our being Actors ourſelves, was an Advantage to our Government, which all former Menagers, who were only idle Gentlemen, wanted: Nor was our Eſtabliſhment eaſily to be broken, while our Health, and Limbs enabled us, to be Joint-labourers in the Work we were Maſters of.

The only Actor, who, in the Opinion of the Publick, ſeem'd to have had a Pretence of being advanc'd to a Share with us, was certainly *Booth:* But when it is conſider'd, how ſtrongly he had oppos'd the Meaſures, that had made us Menagers, by ſetting himſelf (as has been obſerv'd) at the Head of an oppoſite Intereſt, he could not as yet, have much to complain of: Beſide, if the Court had thought him, now, an equal Object of Favour, it could not have been in our Power, to have oppos'd his Preferment: This I mention, not to take from his Merit, but to ſhew, from what Cauſe it was not, as yet, better provided for. Therefore it may be no Vanity to ſay, our having at that Time, no viſible Competitors on the Stage, was the only Intereſt, that rais'd us to be the Menagers of it.

But

But here, let me reſt a while, and ſince, at my time of Day, our beſt Poſſeſſions are but Eaſe, and Quiet, I muſt be content, if I will have Sallies of Pleaſure, to take up with thoſe only, that are to be found in Imagination. When I look back, therefore, on the Storms of the Stage, we had been toſs'd in; when I conſider, that various Viciſſitude of Hopes and Fears, we had for twenty Years ſtruggled with, and found our ſelves, at laſt, thus ſafely ſet on Shore, to enjoy the Produce of our own Labours; and to have rais'd thoſe Labours by our Skill, and Induſtry, to a much fairer Profit, than our Task-maſters, by all their ſevere, and griping Government had ever reap'd from them, a good-natured Reader, that is not offended at the Compariſon of great things, with ſmall, will allow was a Triumph, in proportion, equal to thoſe, that have attended the moſt heroick Enterprizes for Liberty! What Tranſport could the firſt *Brutus* feel, upon his Expulſion of the *Tarquins*, greater than that which now danc'd in the Heart of a poor Actor, who from an injur'd Labourer, unpaid his Hire, had made himſelf, without Guilt, a legal Menager of his own Fortune? Let the Grave, and Great contemn, or yawn at theſe low Conceits, but let me be happy, in the Enjoyment of them! To this Hour my Memory runs o'er that pleaſing Proſpect of Life paſt, with little leſs Delight, than when I was firſt, in the real Poſſeſſion of it. This is the natural Temper of my Mind, which my Acquaintance are frequently Witneſſes of: And as this, was all the Ambition, Providence had made my obſcure Condition capable of, I am thankful, that Means were given me to enjoy the Fruits of it.

--------- *Hoc eſt*
Vivere bis, vitâ poſſe priore frui.

Something like the Meaning of this, the leſs learned Reader may find in my Title Page.

CHAP. XIV.

The Stage, in its higheſt Proſperity. The Menagers not without Errors. Of what Kind. Cato *firſt acted. What brought it to the Stage. The Company go to* Oxford. *Their Succeſs, and different Auditors there.* Booth *made a Sharer.* Dogget *objects to him. Quits the Stage upon his Admittance. That not his true Reaſon. What was.* Dogget's *Theatrical Character.*

NOtwithſtanding the Menaging Actors were, now, in a happier Situation, than their utmoſt Pretenſions could have expected; yet it is not to be ſuppos'd, but wiſer Men might have mended it. As we could not all govern our ſelves, there were Seaſons, when we were not all fit to govern others. Our Paſſions, and our Intereſt drew not always the ſame way. *Self*, had a great Sway in our Debates: We had our Partialities; our Prejudices; our Favourites of leſs Merit; and our Jealouſies of thoſe who came too near us; Frailties, which Societies of higher Conſideration, while they are compos'd of Men, will not always be free from. To have been conſtantly capable of Unanimity, had been a Bleſſing too great for our Station: One Mind, among three People, were to have had three Maſters, to one Servant; but when that one Servant is called three different ways, at the ſame time, whoſe Buſineſs is to be done firſt? For my own Part, I was forced, almoſt all my Life, to give up my Share of him. And if I could, by Art, or Perſuaſion, hinder others from making, what I thought, a wrong uſe of their Power, it was the all, and utmoſt I deſired. Yet whatever might be our Perſonal Errors, I ſhall think I have no Right to ſpeak of them farther, than where the Publick Entertainment was affected by them. If therefore,

fore, among ſo many, ſome particular Actors were remarkable in any part of their private Lives, that might ſometimes make the World merry without Doors; I hope my laughing Friends will excuſe me, if I do not ſo far comply, with their Deſires, or Curioſity, as to give them a Place, in my Hiſtory. I can only recommend ſuch Anecdotes to the Amuſement, of a Noble Perſon, who (in caſe I conceal them) does me the flattering Honour, to threaten my Work, with a Supplement. 'Tis enough for me, that ſuch Actors had their Merits, to the Publick: Let thoſe recite their Imperfections, who are themſelves without them: It is my Misfortune not to have that Qualification. Let us ſee, then (whatever was amiſs in it) how our Adminiſtration went forward.

When we were firſt inveſted, with this Power; the Joy of our ſo unexpectedly coming into it, kept us, for ſome time, in Amity, and Good-humour, with one another: And the Pleaſure of reforming the many falſe Meaſures, Abſurdities, and Abuſes, that like Weeds, had ſuck'd up the due Nouriſhment from the Fruits of the Theatre, gave us, as yet, no leiſure, for private Diſſentions. Our daily Receipts exceeded our Imagination: And we ſeldom met, as a Board, to ſettle our weekly Accounts, without the Satisfaction of Joint-Heirs, juſt in Poſſeſſion of an unexpected Eſtate, that had been diſtantly intail'd upon them. Such a ſudden change of our Condition, it may be imagined, could not but throw out of us a new Spirit, in almoſt every Play we appear'd in: Nor did we ever ſink into that common Negligence, which is apt to follow Good-fortune: Induſtry, we knew, was the Life of our Buſineſs; that it not only conceal'd Faults, but was of equal Value to greater Talents without it; which the Decadence once of *Betterton*'s Company in *Lincoln's-Inn Fields*, had lately ſhewn us a Proof of.

This then was that happy Period, when both Actors and Menagers were in their higheſt Enjoyment of general Content, and Proſperity. Now it was that the politer World too, by their

their decent Attention, their ſenſible Taſte, and their generous Encouragements to Authors, and Actors, once more ſaw, that the Stage, under a due Regulation, was capable of being what the wiſeſt Ages thought it *might* be, The moſt rational Scheme, that Human Wit could form, to diſſipate, with Innocence, the Cares of Life; to allure even the Turbulent, or Ill-diſpoſed from worſe Meditations, and to give the leiſure Hours of Buſineſs, and Virtue, an inſtructive Recreation.

If this grave Aſſertion is leſs recommended, by falling from the Pen of a Comedian; I muſt appeal, for the truth of it, to the Tragedy of *Cato*, which was firſt acted in 1712. I ſubmi to the Judgment of thoſe, who were then the ſenſible Spectators of it, if the Succeſs, and Merit of that Play, was not an Evidence of every Article of that Value, which I have given to a decent Theatre? But (as I was obſerving) it could not be expected the Summer-Days, I am ſpeaking of, could be the conſtant Weather of the Year; we had our clouded Hours, as well as our ſun-ſhine, and were not always in the ſame Good-Humour with one another: Fire, Air, and Water, could not be more vexatiouſly oppoſite, than the different Tempers of the Three Menagers, though they might equally have their uſeful, as well as their deſtructive Qualities. How variouſly theſe Elements, in our ſeveral Diſpoſitions, operated, may be judg'd from the following ſingle Inſtance, as well as from a thouſand others; which, if they were all to be told, might poſſibly make my Reader wiſh I had forgot them.

Much about this time, then, there came over from the *Dublin* Theatre two uncelebrated Actors, to pick up a few Pence among us, in the Winter, as *Wilks* had a Year, or two before, done on their ſide the Water, in the Summer. But it was not ſo clear to *Dogget*, and myſelf, that it was in their Power, to do us the ſame Service in *Drury-Lane*, as *Wilks* might have done them, in *Dublin*. However *Wilks* was ſo much a Man of Honour, that he ſcorn'd to be outdone in the leaſt Point of it, let the

Coſt

Coſt be what it would, to his Fellow-Menagers, who had no particular Accounts of Honour open with them. To acquit himſelf therefore with a better Grace, *Wilks* ſo order'd it, that his *Hibernian* Friends were got upon our Stage, before any other Menager had well heard of their Arrival. This ſo generous Diſpatch of their Affair, gave *Wilks* a very good Chance of convincing his Friends, that Himſelf was ſole Maſter of the Maſters of the Company. Here now, the different Elements in our Tempers began to work with us. While *Wilks* was only animated by a grateful Hoſpitality to his Friends, *Dogget* was ruffled into a Storm, and look'd upon this Generoſity, as ſo much Inſult, and Injuſtice upon himſelf, and the Fraternity. During this Diſorder, I ſtood by, a ſeeming quiet Paſſenger, and, ſince talking to the Winds, I knew could be to no great Purpoſe, (whatever Weakneſs it might be call'd) could not help ſmiling, to obſerve with what officious Eaſe, and Delight, *Wilks* was treating his Friends at our Expence, who were ſcarce acquainted with them: For, it ſeems, all this was to end in their having a Benefit-Play, in the Height of the Seaſon, for the unprofitable Service they had done us, without our Conſent, or Deſire to employ them. Upon this *Dogget* bounc'd, and grew almoſt as untractable as *Wilks* himſelf. Here, again, I was forc'd to clap my Patience to the Helm, to weather this difficult Point between them: Applying myſelf therefore to the Perſon, I imagin'd was moſt likely to hear me, I deſired *Dogget*, " to conſider, that I " muſt naturally, be as much hurt, by this vain, and over-bear- " ing Behaviour of *Wilks*, as he could be; and that tho' it was " true, theſe Actors, had no Pretence, to the Favour deſign'd " them; yet we could not ſay they had done us any farther " Harm, than letting the Town ſee, the Parts they had been " ſhewn in, had been better done by thoſe, to whom they pro- " perly belong'd: Yet as we had greatly profited, by the ex- " traordinary Labour of *Wilks*, who acted long Parts almoſt " every Day, and at leaſt twice to *Dogget*'s once, and that I

" granted

" granted it might not be ſo much his Conſideration of our " common Intereſt, as his Fondneſs for Applauſe, that ſet him " to work; yet even that Vanity, if he ſuppoſed it ſuch, had " its Merit to us; and as we had found our Account in it, it " would be Folly upon a Punctilio, to tempt the Raſhneſs of a " Man, who was capable to undo all he had done, by any Act " of Extravagance, that might fly, into his Head: That admit- " ting this Benefit might be ſome little Loſs to us, yet to break " with him upon it, could not but be ten times of worſe conſe- " quence, than our over-looking his diſagreeable manner of ma- " king the Demand upon us.

Tho', I found, this had made *Dogget* drop the Severity of his Features, yet he endeavour'd ſtill to ſeem uneaſy, by his ſtarting a new Objection, which was, That we could not be ſure even of the Charge, they were to pay for it: For *Wilks*, ſaid he, you know will go any Lengths, to make it a good Day, to them, and may whiſper the Door-keepers, to give them the Ready-mony taken, and return the Account, in ſuch Tickets only, as theſe Actors, have not themſelves diſpos'd of. To make this eaſy too, I gave him my Word, to be anſwerable for the Charge, myſelf. Upon this he acceded, and accordingly they had the Benefit-Play. But ſo it happen'd (whether as *Dogget* had ſuſpected, or not, I cannot ſay) the Ready-Mony receiv'd fell Ten Pounds ſhort of the Sum, they had agreed to pay for it. Upon the *Saturday* following, (the Day on which we conſtantly made up our Accounts) I went early to the Office, and inquired, if the Ten Pounds had yet been paid in; but not hearing that one Shilling of it had found its way thither, I immediately ſupply'd the Sum out of my own Pocket, and directed the Treaſurer to charge it receiv'd from me, in the deficient Receipt of the Benefit-Day. Here, now, it might be imagined, all this ſilly Matter was accommodated, and that no one could ſo properly ſay, he was aggrieved, as myſelf: But let us obſerve what the Conſequence ſays --- why, the Effect of my inſolent

ſolent interpoſing, honeſty prov'd to be this: That the Party moſt oblig'd, was the moſt offended; and the Offence was imputed to me, who had been Ten Pounds out of Pocket, to be able to commit it: For when *Wilks* found, in the Account, how ſpitefully the Ten Pounds had been paid in, he took me aſide into the adjacent Stone-Paſſage, and with ſome Warmth ask'd me, What I meant by pretending to pay in this Ten Pounds? and that, for his part, he did not underſtand ſuch Treatment. To which I reply'd, That tho' I was amazed, at his thinking himſelf ill-treated, I would give him a plain, juſtifiable Anſwer. --- That I had given my Word to *Dogget*, the Charge of the Benefit ſhould be fully paid, and ſince his Friends had neglected it, I found myſelf bound to make it good. Upon which he told me, I was miſtaken, if I thought, he did not ſee into the bottom of all This --- That *Dogget*, and I, were always endeavouring to thwart, and make him uneaſy; but he was able to ſtand upon his own Legs, and we ſhould find he would not be us'd ſo: That he took this Payment of the Ten Pounds, as an Inſult upon him, and a Slight to his Friends; but rather than ſuffer it, he would tear the whole Buſineſs to pieces: That I knew it was in his Power to do it; and if he could not do a civil thing to a Friend, without all this ſenſeleſs Rout about it, he could be receiv'd in *Ireland* upon his own Terms, and could as eaſily mend a Company there, as he had done here: That if he were gone, *Dogget* and I would not be able to keep the Doors open a Week, and, by G---, he would not be a Drudge for nothing. As I knew all this was but the Foam of the high Value he had ſet upon himſelf, I thought it not amiſs, to ſeem a little ſilently concern'd, for the helpleſs Condition, to which his Reſentment of the Injury I have related, was going to reduce us: For I knew I had a Friend, in his Heart, that, if I gave him a little time to cool, would ſoon bring him to Reaſon: The ſweet Morſel of a Thouſand Pounds a Year, was not to be met with at every Table, and might tempt a nicer Palate than his own,

to ſwallow it, when he was not out of Humour. This I knew would always be of weight with him, when the beſt Arguments I could uſe, would be of none. I therefore gave him no farther Provocation, than by gravely telling him, We all had it in our Power to do one another a Miſchief; but I believ'd none of us much cared to hurt ourſelves; that if he was not of my Opinion, it would not be in my Power, to hinder whatever new Scheme, he might reſolve upon; that *London* would always have a Playhouſe, and I ſhould have ſome Chance in it, tho' it might not be ſo good as it had been; that he might be ſure, if I had thought my paying in the Ten Pounds could have been ſo ill receiv'd; I ſhould have been glad to have ſav'd it. Upon this he ſeem'd to mutter ſomething to himſelf, and walk'd off, as if he had a mind to be alone. I took the Occaſion, and return'd to *Dogget*, to finiſh our Accounts. In about ſix Minutes *Wilks* came in, to us; not in the beſt Humour, it may be imagin'd; yet not in ſo ill a one, but that he took his Share of the Ten Pounds, without ſhewing the leaſt Contempt of it; which, had he been proud enough to have refus'd, or to have paid in himſelf, I might have thought, he intended to make good his Menaces, and that the Injury I had done him would never have been forgiven; but, it ſeems we had different ways of thinking.

Of this kind, more or leſs delightful, was the Life I led, with this impatient Man, for full twenty Years. *Dogget*, as we ſhall find, could not hold it ſo long; but as he had more Mony than I, he had not occaſion for ſo much Philoſophy. And thus were our Theatrical Affairs frequently diſconcerted, by this iraſcible Commander, this *Achilles* of our Confederacy; who, I may be bold to ſay, came very little ſhort of the Spirit *Horace* gives to that Hero in his---

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer.

This, then, is one of thoſe Perſonal Anecdotes of our Variances, which,

which, as our publick Performances were affected by it, could not with regard to Truth, and Juſtice, be omitted.

From this time, to the Year 1712, my Memory (from which Repoſitory alone, every Article of what I write is collected) has nothing worth mentioning, 'till the firſt acting of the Tragedy of *Cato*. As to the Play itſelf, it might be enough to ſay, That the Author, and the Actors had their different Hopes of Fame, and Profit, amply anſwer'd by the Performance; but as its Succeſs was attended with remarkable Conſequences, it may not be amiſs to trace it, from its ſeveral Years Concealment, in the Cloſet, to the Stage.

In 1703, nine Years before it was acted, I had the Pleaſure of reading the firſt four Acts (which was all of it then written) privately with Sir *Richard Steele:* It may be needleſs, to ſay it was impoſſible to lay them out of my Hand, 'till I had gone thro' them; or to dwell upon the Delight, his Friendſhip to the Author receiv'd, upon my being ſo warmly pleas'd with them: But my Satisfaction was as highly diſappointed, when he told me, Whatever Spirit Mr. *Addiſon* had ſhewn, in his writing it, he doubted, he would never have Courage enough, to let his *Cato* ſtand the Cenſure of an *Engliſh* Audience; that it had only been the Amuſement of his leiſure Hours in *Italy*, and was never intended, for the Stage. This Poetical Diffidence Sir *Richard* himſelf ſpoke of with ſome Concern, and in the Tranſport of his Imagination, could not help ſaying, *Good God! what a Part would* Betterton *make of* Cato! But this was ſeven Years before *Betterton* died, and when *Booth* (who afterwards made his Fortune by acting it) was in his Theatrical Minority. In the latter end of Queen *Anne*'s Reign, when our National Politicks had changed Hands; the Friends of Mr. *Addiſon*, then thought it a proper time to animate the Publick with the Sentiments of *Cato*; in a word, their Importunities were too warm, to be reſiſted; and it was no ſooner finiſh'd, than hurried to the Stage, in *April* 1712, at a time when three Days a Week were uſually

appointed for the Benefit Plays of particular Actors: But a Work of that critical Importance, was to make its way, through all private Conſiderations; nor could it poſſibly give place to a Cuſtom, which the Breach of could very little prejudice the Benefits, that on ſo unavoidable an Occaſion, were (in part, tho' not wholly) poſtpon'd; it was therefore (*Mondays* excepted) acted every Day for a Month, to conſtantly crowded Houſes. As the Author had made us a Preſent of whatever Profits he might have claim'd from it, we thought our ſelves oblig'd, to ſpare no Coſt, in the proper Decorations of it. Its coming ſo late in the Seaſon, to the Stage, prov'd of particular Advantage, to the ſharing Actors; becauſe the Harveſt of our annual Gains was generally over, before the middle of *March*; many ſelect Audiences being then, uſually reſerv'd, in favour to the Benefits of private Actors; which fixt Engagements naturally abated the Receipts of the Days, before and after them: But this unexpected After-crop of *Cato*, largely ſupplied to us, thoſe Deficiencies; and was almoſt equal to two fruitful Seaſons, in the ſame Year; at the Cloſe of which, the three menaging Actors found themſelves, each a Gainer of thirteen hundred, and fifty Pounds: But to return to the firſt Reception of this Play from the Publick.

Although *Cato* ſeems plainly written upon what are called *Whig* Principles; yet the *Torys* of that time had Senſe enough not to take it, as the leaſt Reflection, upon their Adminiſtration; but on the contrary, they ſeem'd to brandiſh, and vaunt their Approbation of every Sentiment in favour of Liberty, which by a publick Act of their Generoſity, was carried ſo high, that one Day, while the Play was acting, they collected fifty Guineas in the Boxes, and made a Preſent of them to *Booth*, with this Compliment---- *For his honeſt Oppoſition to a perpetual Dictator*; *and his dying ſo bravely, in the Cauſe of Liberty:* What was inſinuated, by any Part of theſe Words, is not my Affair; but ſo publick a Reward had the Appearance of a laudable Spirit, which only ſuch a Play, as *Cato*, could have inſpired; nor could *Booth* be

be blam'd, if upon ſo particular a Diſtinction of his Merit, he began himſelf to ſet more Value upon it: How far he might carry it, in making uſe of the Favour he ſtood in, with a certain Nobleman, then in Power, at Court, was not difficult to penetrate; and indeed, ought always to have been expected by the menaging Actors: For which of them (making the Caſe every way his own) could with ſuch Advantages, have contented himſelf, in the humble Station of an hired Actor? But let us ſee how the Menagers ſtood ſeverally affected, upon this Occaſion.

Dogget, who, expected, though he fear'd not, the Attempt of what after happen'd, imagin'd he had thought of an Expedient to prevent it: And to cover his Deſign with all the Art of a Stateſman, he inſinuated to us (for he was a ſtaunch *Whig*) that this Preſent of fifty Guineas, was a ſort of a *Tory* Triumph, which they had no Pretence to; and that for his Part, he could not bear, that ſo redoubted a Champion for Liberty, as *Cato*, ſhould be bought off, to the Cauſe of a contrary Party: He therefore, in the ſeeming Zeal of his Heart, propoſed, that the Menagers themſelves ſhould make the ſame Preſent to *Booth*, which had been made him, from the Boxes, the Day before. This, he ſaid, would recommend the Equality, and liberal Spirit of our Menagement, to the Town, and might be a Means, to ſecure *Booth* more firmly in our Intereſt; it never having been known, that the Skill of the beſt Actor had receiv'd ſo round a Reward, or Gratuity, in one Day, before. *Wilks*, who wanted nothing but Abilities to be as cunning, as *Dogget*, was ſo charm'd with the Propoſal, that he long'd, that Moment, to make *Booth* the Preſent, with his own Hands; and though he knew he had no Right to do it, without my Conſent, had not Patience to ask it; upon which I turn'd to *Dogget*, with a cold Smile, and told him, that if *Booth* could be purchas'd at ſo cheap a Rate, it would be one of the beſt Proofs of his Oeconomy, we had ever been beholden to: I therefore deſired we might have a little Patience; that our doing it too haſtily might be only making ſure

of

of an Occaſion, to throw the fifty Guineas away; for if we ſhould be oblig'd to do better for him, we could never expect, that *Booth* would think himſelf bound, in Honour, to refund them. This ſeem'd ſo abſurd an Argument to *Wilks*, that he began with his uſual Freedom of Speech, to treat it, as a pitiful Evaſion of their intended Generoſity: But *Dogget*, who was not ſo wide of my Meaning, clapping his Hand upon mine, ſaid, with an Air of Security, O! don't trouble your ſelf! there muſt be two Words to that Bargain; let me alone, to menage that Matter. *Wilks*, upon this dark Diſcourſe, grew uneaſy, as if there were ſome Secret between us, that he was to be left out of. Therefore to avoid the Shock of his Intemperance, I was reduc'd to tell him, that it was my Opinion, that *Booth* would never be made eaſy, by any thing we could do for him, till he had a Share, in the Profits, and Menagement; and that, as he did not want Friends to aſſiſt him, whatever his Merit might be before, every one would think, ſince his acting of *Cato*, he had now enough to back his Pretenſions to it. To which *Dogget* reply'd, that nobody could think his Merit was ſlighted, by ſo handſome a Preſent, as fifty Guineas; and that for his farther Pretenſions, whatever the Licenſe might avail, our Property of Houſe, Scenes, and Cloaths were our own, and not in the Power of the Crown to diſpoſe of. To conclude, my Objections, that the Mony would be only thrown away, *&c.* were over-rul'd, and the ſame Night *Booth* had the fifty Guineas, which he receiv'd with a Thankfulneſs, that made *Wilks*, and *Dogget* perfectly eaſy; inſomuch that they ſeem'd, for ſome time to triumph in their Conduct, and often endeavour'd to laugh my Jealouſy out of Countenance: But in the following Winter, the Game happen'd to take a different Turn; and then, if it had been a laughing Matter, I had as ſtrong an Occaſion to ſmile at their former Security. But before I make an End of this Matter, I cannot paſs over the good Fortune of the Company, that follow'd us, to the Act at *Oxford*, which was held in the intervening Summer:

Perhaps

Perhaps too, a ſhort View of the Stage, in that different Situation, may not be unacceptable to the Curious.

After the Reſtoration of King *Charles*, before the *Cavalier*, and *Round-head* Parties, under their new Denomination of *Whig*, and *Tory*, began again to be politically troubleſome, publick Acts at *Oxford* (as I find by the Date of ſeveral Prologues written by *Dryden*, for *Hart* on thoſe Occaſions) had been more frequently held, than in later Reigns. Whether the ſame Party-Diſſentions may have occaſion'd the Diſcontinuance of them, is a Speculation, not neceſſary to be enter'd into. But theſe Academical Jubilees have uſually been look'd upon as a kind of congratulatory Compliment, to the Acceſſion of every new Prince, to the Throne, and generally, as ſuch have attended them. King *James*, notwithſtanding his Religion, had the Honour of it; at which the Players, as uſual, aſſiſted. This I have only mention'd, to give the Reader a Theatrical Anecdote of a Liberty, which *Tony Leigh* the Comedian took with the Character of the well known *Obadiah Walker*, then Head of *Univerſity Colledge*, who, in that Prince's Reign, had turn'd *Roman Catholick:* The Circumſtance is this.

In the latter End of the Comedy call'd the *Committee*, *Leigh*, who acted the Part of *Teague*, hauling in *Obadiah*, with an Halter about his Neck, whom, according to his written Part, he was to threaten to hang, for no better Reaſon than his refuſing to drink the King's Health, (but here *Leigh)* to juſtify his Purpoſe, with a ſtronger Provocation, put himſelf into a more, than ordinary Heat, with his Captive *Obadiah*, which having heightened his Maſter's Curioſity, to know what *Obadiah* had done to deſerve ſuch Uſage, *Leigh*, folding his Arms, with a ridiculous Stare of Aſtoniſhment, reply'd----- *Upon my Shoule, he has ſhange his Religion.* As the Merit of this Jeſt lay chiefly in the Auditors ſudden Application of it, to the *Obadiah* of *Oxford*, it was receiv'd with all the Triumph of Applauſe, which the Zeal of a different Religion could inſpire. But

Leigh

Leigh was given to underſtand, that the King was highly diſpleas'd at it, inaſmuch, as it had ſhewn him, that the Univerſity was in a Temper to make a Jeſt of his Proſelyte. But to return to the Conduct of our own Affairs there, in 1712.

It had been a Cuſtom for the Comedians, while at *Oxford*, to act twice a Day; the firſt Play ending every Morning, before the College Hours of dining, and the other never to break into the Time of ſhutting their Gates in the Evening. This extraordinary Labour gave all the hired Actors a Title to double Pay, which, at the Act, in King *William*'s Time, I had myſelf accordingly receiv'd there. But the preſent Menagers conſidering, that by acting only once a Day, their Spirits might be freſher for every ſingle Performance, and that by this Means, they might be able to fill up the Term of their Reſidence, without the Repetition of their beſt, and ſtrongeſt Plays; and as their Theatre was contriv'd to hold a full third more, than the uſual Form of it had done, one Houſe well fill'd, might anſwer the Profits of two but moderately taken up: Being enabled too, by their late Succeſs, at *London*, to make the Journey pleaſant, and profitable, to the reſt of their Society, they reſolv'd to continue to them, their double Pay, notwithſtanding this new Abatement of half their Labour. This Conduct of the Menagers more than anſwer'd their Intention, which was rather to get nothing themſelves, than not let their Fraternity be the better for the Expedition. Thus they laid an Obligation, upon their Company, and were themſelves conſiderably, though unexpected, Gainers by it. But my chief Reaſon for bringing the Reader to *Oxford*, was to ſhew the different Taſte of Plays there, from that which prevail'd at *London*. A great deal of that falſe, flaſhy Wit, and forc'd Humour, which had been the Delight of our Metropolitan Multitude, was only rated there at its bare, intrinſick Value; Applauſe was not to be purchas'd there, but by the true Sterling, the *Sal Atticum* of a Genius; unleſs where the Skill of the Actor paſs'd it upon them, with ſome extraordinary Strokes

of

of Nature. *Shakeſpear*, and *Johnſon* had, there, a ſort of claſſical Authority; for whoſe maſterly Scenes they ſeem'd to have as implicit a Reverence, as formerly, for the Ethicks of *Ariſtotle*; and were as incapable of allowing Moderns to be their Competitors, as of changing their Academical Habits for gaudy Colours, or Embroidery. Whatever Merit, therefore, ſome few of our more politely-written Comedies might pretend to, they had not the ſame Effect upon the Imagination there, nor were receiv'd with that extraordinary Applauſe, they had met with, from the People of Mode, and Pleaſure, in *London*; whoſe vain Accompliſhments did not diſlike themſelves, in the Glaſs, that was held to them: The elegant Follies of higher Life, were not, at *Oxford*, among their Acquaintance, and conſequently might not be ſo good Company, to a learned Audience, as Nature, in her plain Dreſs, and unornamented, in her Purſuits and Inclinations, ſeem'd to be.

The only diſtinguiſh'd Merit, allow'd to any modern Writer, was to the Author of *Cato*, which Play being the Flower of a Plant, rais'd in that learned Garden, (for there Mr. *Addiſon* had his Education) what Favour may we not ſuppoſe was due to him, from an Audience of Brethren, who from that local Relation to him, might naturally have a warmer Pleaſure, in their Benevolence to his Fame? But not to give more Weight to this imaginary Circumſtance, than it may bear, the Fact was, that on our firſt Day of acting it, our Houſe was, in a manner, inveſted; and Entrance demanded by twelve a Clock at Noon, and before one, it was not wide enough for many, who came too late for Places. The ſame Crowds continued for three Days together, (an uncommon Curioſity in that Place) and the Death of *Cato* triumph'd over the Injuries of *Cæſar*, every where. To conclude, our Reception at *Oxford*, whatever our Merit might be, exceeded our Expectation. At our taking Leave, we had the Thanks of the Vice-Chancellor, for the Decency, and Order, obſerv'd by our whole Society; an Honour which had not always

been paid, upon the ſame Occaſions; for at the Act, in King *William*'s Time, I remember ſome Pranks of a different Nature had been complain'd of. Our Receipts had not only enabled us (as I have obſerv'd) to double the Pay of every Actor, but to afford out of them, towards the Repair of St. *Mary*'s Church, the Contribution of fifty Pounds: Beſides which, each of the three Menagers had to his reſpective Share, clear of all Charges, one hundred and fifty more, for his one and twenty Day's Labour; which being added to his thirteen hundred, and fifty, ſhared in the Winter preceding, amounted, in the whole, to fifteen hundred; the greateſt Sum ever known to have been ſhared, in one Year, to that Time: And to the Honour of our Auditors, here, and elſewhere be it ſpoken, all this was rais'd, without the Aid of thoſe barbarous Entertaiments, with which, ſome few Years after (upon the Re-eſtabliſhment of two contending Companies) we were forc'd to diſgrace the Stage, to ſupport it.

This, therefore, is that remarkable Period, when the Stage, during my Time upon it, was the leaſt reproachable: And it may be worth the publick Obſervation (if any thing I have ſaid of it can be ſo) that *One* Stage may, as I have prov'd it has done, very laudably ſupport it ſelf, by ſuch Spectacles only, as are fit to delight a ſenſible People; but the equal Proſperity of *Two* Stages has always been of a very ſhort Duration. If therefore the Publick ſhould ever recover, into the true Taſte of that Time, and ſtick to it; the Stage muſt come into it, or *ſtarve*; as whenever the general Taſte is vulgar, the Stage muſt come down to it, to *live*---- But I ask Pardon of the Multitude, who, in all Regulations of the Stage, may expect, to be a little indulg'd, in what they like: If therefore they *will* have a May-pole, why, the Players muſt *give* them a May-pole; but I only ſpeak, in caſe they ſhould keep an old Cuſtom of changing their Minds; and by their Privilege of being in the *wrong*, ſhould take a Fancy, by way of Variety, of being in the *right*--- Then,

in

in ſuch a Caſe, what I have ſaid may appear to have been no intended Deſign, againſt their Liberty of judging, for themſelves.

After our Return, from *Oxford*, *Booth* was at full Leiſure, to ſollicit his Admiſſion, to a Share, in the Menagement; in which he ſucceeded, about the Beginning of the following Winter: Accordingly a new Licenſe (recalling all former Licenſes) was iſſued, wherein *Booth*'s Name was added, to thoſe of the other Menagers. But ſtill, there was a Difficulty, in his Qualification, to be adjuſted; what Conſideration he ſhould allow, for an equal Title to our Stock of Cloaths, Scenes, *&c.* without which, the Licenſe was of no more uſe, than the Stock was without the Licenſe; or, at leaſt, if there were any Difference, the former Menagers ſeem'd to have the Advantage, in it; the Stock being intirely theirs, and three Parts in four of the Licenſe; for *Collier*, though now but a fifth Menager, ſtill inſiſted on his former Appointment of 700 *l.* a Year; which, in Equity ought certainly to have been proportionably abated: But Court-Favour was not always meaſur'd by *that* Yard; *Collier*'s Matter was ſoon out of the Queſtion; his Pretenſions were too viſible, to be conteſted; but the Affair of *Booth* was not ſo clear a Point: The Lord Chamberlain, therefore, only recommended it, to be adjuſted, among our ſelves; which, to ſay the Truth, at that Time, was a greater Indulgence than I expected. Let us ſee, then, how this critical Caſe was handled.

Wilks was of Opinion, that to ſet a good round Value upon our Stock, was the only way, to come near an Equivalent, for the Dimunition of our Shares, which the Admiſſion of *Booth* muſt occaſion: But *Dogget* inſiſted, that he had no Mind to diſpoſe of any Part of his Property, and therefore would ſet no Price upon it at all. Though I allow'd, that Both theſe Opinions might be grounded, on a good deal of Equity, yet I was not ſure that either of them was practicable; and therefore told them, that when they could Both agree, which of them could be made

ſo, they might rely on my Conſent, in any Shape. In the mean time, I deſired they would conſider, that as our Licenſe ſubſiſted only during Pleaſure, we could not pretend, that the Queen might not recall, or alter it: But that to ſpeak out, without mincing the Matter on either Side, the Truth was plainly this: That *Booth* had a manifeſt Merit, as an Actor; and as he was not ſuppoſed to be a *Whig*, it was as evident, that a good deal for that Reaſon, a Secretary of State had taken him into his Protection, which I was afraid the weak Pretence of our invaded Property, would not be able to contend with: That his having ſignaliz'd himſelf, in the Character of *Cato* (whoſe Principles the *Tories* had affected to have taken, into their own Poſſeſſion) was a very popular Pretence of making him free of the Stage, by advancing him, to the Profits of it. And, as we had ſeen, that the Stage was frequently treated, as if it was not ſuppos'd, to have any Property at all; this Favour intended to *Booth* was thought a right Occaſion, to avow that Opinion, by diſpoſing of its Property, at Pleaſure: But be that, as it might, I own'd, it was not ſo much my Apprehenſions of what the *Court* might do, that ſway'd me, into an Accommodation with *Booth*, as what the *Town*, (in whoſe Favour he now apparently ſtood) might think *ought* to be done: That, there might be more danger in conteſting their arbitrary Will, and Pleaſure, than in diſputing this leſs terrible Strain of the Prerogative. That if *Booth* were only impos'd upon us, from his Merit to the Court, we were then, in the Condition of other Subjects: Then, indeed, Law, Right, and Poſſeſſion, might have a tolerable Tug, for our Property: But as the Town would always look upon his Merit to *them*, in a ſtronger Light, and be Judges of it themſelves, it would be a weak, and idle Endeavour, in us, not to ſail with the Stream, when we might poſſibly make a Merit of our cheerfully admitting him: That though his former Oppoſition to our Intereſt, might, between Man and Man, a good deal juſtify our not making an earlier Friend of him; yet that was a Diſobligation,

tion, out of the Town's Regard, and conſequently would be of no weight, againſt ſo approv'd an Actor's being preferr'd. But all this, notwithſtanding, if they could both agree, in a different Opinion, I would, at the Hazard of any Conſequence, be guided by it.

Here, now, will be ſhewn another Inſtance of our different Tempers: *Dogget* (who in all Matters, that concern'd our common Weal, and Intereſt, little regarded our Opinion, and even to an Obſtinacy, walked by his own) look'd only out of Humour, at what I had ſaid, and without thinking himſelf oblig'd to give any Reaſon for it, declar'd, he would maintain his Property. *Wilks*, (who, upon the ſame Occaſions, was as remarkably ductile, as when his Superiority on the Stage, was in queſtion, he was aſſuming, and intractable, ſaid, for his Part, provided our Buſineſs of acting was not interrupted, he did not care what we did: But, in ſhort, he was for playing on, come what would of it. This laſt Part of his Declaration I did not diſlike, and therefore I deſir'd, we might all enter into an immediate Treaty with *Booth*, upon the Terms of his Admiſſion. *Dogget* ſtill ſullenly reply'd, that he had no Occaſion, to enter into any Treaty. *Wilks* then, to ſoften him, propos'd, that, if I liked it, *Dogget* might undertake it himſelf. I agreed. No! he would not be concern'd in it. I then offer'd the ſame Truſt to *Wilks*, if *Dogget* approv'd of it. *Wilks* ſaid, he was not good at making of Bargains, but if I was willing, he would rather leave it to me. *Dogget*, at this, roſe up, and ſaid, we might both do as we pleas'd, but that nothing but the Law, ſhould make him part with his Property--- and ſo went out of the Room. After which he never came among us more, either as an Actor, or Menager.

By his having, in this abrupt manner, abdicated his Poſt, in our Government; what he left of it, naturally devolv'd, upon *Wilks*, and myſelf. However, this did not ſo much diſtreſs our Affair, as I have Reaſon to believe *Dogget* thought it would: For though, by our Indentures tripartite, we could not diſpoſe

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of his Property, without his Conſent: Yet thoſe Indentures could not oblige us to faſt, becauſe he had no Appetite; and if the Mill did not grind, we could have no Bread: We therefore determin'd, at any Hazard, to keep our Buſineſs ſtill going, and that our ſafeſt way would be, to make the beſt Bargain we could with *Booth*; one Article of which was to be, That *Booth* ſhould ſtand equally anſwerable with us, to *Dogget*, for the Conſequence: To which *Booth* made no Objection, and the reſt of his Agreement, was to allow us Six Hundred Pounds for his Share, in our Property, which was to be paid by ſuch Sums as ſhould ariſe from half his Profits of Acting, 'till the whole was diſcharg'd: Yet ſo cautious were we in this Affair, that this Agreement was only Verbal on our Part, tho' written, and ſign'd by *Booth*, as what intirely contented him: However, Bond and Judgment, could not have made it more ſecure, to him; for he had his Share, and was able to diſcharge the Incumbrance upon it, by his Income of that Year only. Let us ſee what *Dogget* did in this Affair, after he had left us.

Might it not be imagin'd, that *Wilks*, and Myſelf, by having made this Matter eaſy to *Booth*, ſhould have deſerv'd the Approbation at leaſt, if not the Favour of the Court, that had exerted ſo much Power to prefer him? But ſhall I be believed, when I affirm, that *Dogget*, who had ſo ſtrongly oppos'd the Court, in his Admiſſion to a Share, was very near getting the better of us both, upon that Account, and for ſome time appeared to have more Favour there, than either of us? Let me tell out my Story, and then think what you pleaſe of it.

Dogget, who was equally oblig'd, with us, to act, upon the Stage, as to aſſiſt, in the Menagement of it, tho' he had refus'd to do either, ſtill demanded of us his whole Share of the Profits, without conſidering what Part of them *Booth* might pretend to, from our late Conceſſions. After many fruitleſs Endeavours to bring him back, to us; *Booth* join'd with us, in making him an Offer of half a Share, if he had a mind totally to quit the Stage,

Stage, and make it a *Sine cure.* No! he wanted the Whole, and to ſit ſtill himſelf, while we (if we pleaſed) might work for him, or let it alone, and none of us all, neither he, nor we, be the better for it. What we imagin'd encourag'd him to hold us at this ſhort Defiance, was, that he had laid up enough to live upon, without the Stage (for he was one of thoſe cloſe Oeconomiſts, whom Prodigals call a Miſer) and therefore partly from an Inclination, as an invincible *Whig*, to ſignalize himſelf in defence of his Property, and as much preſuming that our Neceſſities would oblige us to come to his own Terms, he was determin'd (even againſt the Opinion of his Friends) to make no other Peace, with us. But not being able, by this inflexible Perſeverance, to have his wicked Will of us, he was reſolv'd to go to the Fountain-head of his own Diſtreſs, and try, if from thence, he could turn the Current againſt us. He appeal'd to the Vice-Chamberlain, to whoſe Direction, the adjuſting of all theſe Theatrical Difficulties, was then committed: But there, I dare ſay, the Reader does not expect he ſhould meet with much Favour: However, be that, as it may; for whether any regard was had, to his having ſome Thouſands, in his Pocket; or that he was conſider'd, as a Man, who would, or could make more Noiſe, in the Matter, than Courtiers might care for: Or what Charms, Spells, or Conjurations he might make uſe of, is all Darkneſs to me; yet ſo it was, he one way or other, play'd his Part ſo well, that, in a few Days after, we received an Order, from the Vice-Chamberlain, poſitively commanding us, to pay *Dogget* his whole Share, notwithſtanding, we had complain'd before of his having withdrawn himſelf from acting on the Stage, and from the Menagement of it. This I thought was a dainty Diſtinction, indeed! that *Dogget*'s Defiance of the Commands in favour of *Booth*, ſhould be rewarded with ſo ample a *Sine cure*; and that we, for our Obedience, ſhould be condemn'd to dig in the Mine, to pay it him! This bitter Pill, I confeſs, was more than I could down with, and therefore ſoon determin'd, at

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all Events, never to take it. But, as I had a Man in Power to deal with, it was not my buſineſs to ſpeak *out* to him, or to ſet forth our Treatment, in its proper Colours. My only Doubt was, Whether I could bring *Wilks* into the ſame Sentiments (for he never car'd to litigate any thing, that did not affect his Figure upon the Stage.) But I had the good Fortune to lay our Condition, in ſo precarious, and diſagreeable a Light to him, if we ſubmitted to this Order, that he fir'd, before I could get thro' half the Conſequences of it; and I began now to find it more difficult, to keep him within Bounds, than I had before to alarm him. I then propos'd to him this Expedient: That we ſhould draw up a Remonſtrance, neither ſeeming to refuſe, or comply with this Order; but to ſtart ſuch Objections, and perplexing Difficulties, that ſhould make the whole impracticable: That under ſuch Diſtractions, as this would raiſe in our Affairs, we could not be anſwerable to keep open our Doors, which conſequently would deſtroy the Fruit of the Favour lately granted to *Booth*, as well as of This intended to *Dogget* himſelf. To this Remonſtrance we receiv'd an Anſwer in Writing, which varied ſomething, in the Meaſures, to accommodate Matters with *Dogget*. This was all I deſired, when I found the Style of *Sic jubeo* was alter'd, when this formidable Power began to *parley* with us, we knew there could not be much, to be fear'd, from it: For I would have remonſtrated, 'till I had died, rather than have yielded to the roughеſt, or ſmootheſt Perſuaſion, that could intimidate, or deceive us. By this Conduct, we made the Affair, at laſt, too troubleſome for the Eaſe of a Courtier to go thro' with. For when it was conſider'd, that the principal Point, the Admiſſion of *Booth* was got over, *Dogget* was fairly left to the Law, for Relief.

Upon this Diſappointment, *Dogget* accordingly preferred a Bill in *Chancery* againſt us. *Wilks*, who hated all Buſineſs, but that of entertaining the Publick, left the Conduct of our Cauſe to me; in which we had, at our firſt ſetting out, this Advantage of

of *Dogget*, that we had Three Pockets to ſupport our Expence, where he had but One. My firſt Direction to our Solicitor was, to uſe all poſſible Delay, that the Law would admit of; a Direction, that Lawyers ſeldom neglect; by this means we hung up our Plaintiff about two Years, in *Chancery*, 'till we were at full Leiſure to come to a Hearing before the Lord-Chancellor *Cooper*; which did not happen 'till after the Acceſſion of his late Majeſty. The Iſſue of it was this. *Dogget* had about fourteen Days allow'd him to make his Election, whether he would return to act, as uſual: But he declaring, by his Counſel, That he rather choſe to quit the Stage, he was decreed Six Hundred Pounds for his Share, in our Property, with 15 *per Cent.* Intereſt, from the Date of the laſt Licenſe: Upon the Receipt of which, both Parties were to ſign General-Releaſes, and ſeverally to pay their own Coſts. By this Decree, *Dogget*, when his Lawyer's Bill was paid, ſcarce got one Year's Purchaſe, of what we had offered him without Law, which (as he ſurvived but ſeven Years after it) would have been an Annuity of Five Hundred Pounds, and a *Sine cure* for Life.

Tho' there are many Perſons living, who know every Article of theſe Facts, to be true: Yet it will be found, that the ſtrongeſt of them, was not the ſtrongeſt Occaſion of *Dogget*'s quitting the Stage. If therefore the Reader ſhould not have Curioſity enough to know, how the Publick came, to be depriv'd of ſo valuable an Actor, let him conſider, that he is not oblig'd to go through the reſt of this Chapter, which I fairly tell him before-hand, will only be fill'd up with a few idle Anecdotes, leading to that Diſcovery.

After our Law-ſuit was ended, *Dogget*, for ſome few Years, could ſcarce bear the Sight of *Wilks*, or myſelf; tho' (as ſhall be ſhewn) for different Reaſons: Yet it was his Misfortune to meet with us almoſt every Day. *Button*'s Coffee-houſe, ſo celebrated in the *Tatlers*, for the Good-Company, that came there, was at this time, in its higheſt Requeſt. *Addiſon*, *Steele*, *Pope*, and ſe-

veral other Gentlemen of different Merit, then made it their conſtant *Rendezvous.* Nor could *Dogget* decline the agreeable Converſation there, tho' he was daily ſure to find *Wilks*, or myſelf, in the ſame Place, to ſour his Share of it: For as *Wilks*, and He were differently proud; the one rejoycing in a captious, overbearing, valiant Pride; and the other, in a ſtiff, ſullen, Purſe-Pride, it may be eaſily conceiv'd, when two ſuch Tempers met, how agreeable the Sight of one was to the other. And as *Dogget* knew, I had been the chief Conductor of our Defence, againſt his Law-ſuit, which had hurt him more, for the Loſs he had ſuſtain'd, in his Reputation of underſtanding Buſineſs, which he valued himſelf upon, than his Diſappointment had, of getting ſo little by it; it was no wonder if I was intirely out of his good Graces, which I confeſs, I was inclin'd, upon any reaſonable Terms, to have recover'd; he being of all my Theatrical Brethren, the Man I had moſt delighted in: For when he was not in a Fit of Wiſdom, or not over-concern'd about his Intereſt, he had a great deal of entertaining Humour: I therefore, notwithſtanding his Reſerve, always left the Door open to our former Intimacy, if he were inclin'd to come into it. I never fail'd to give him my Hat, and, *Your Servant*, wherever I met him; neither of which he would ever return, for above a Year after; but I ſtill perſiſted, in my uſual Salutation, without obſerving, whether it was civilly receiv'd, or not. This ridiculous Silence between two Comedians, that had ſo lately liv'd in a conſtant courſe of Raillery, with one another, was often ſmil'd at, by our Acquaintance, who frequented the ſame Coffee-houſe: And one of them carried his Jeſt upon it ſo far, that when I was at ſome diſtance from Town, he wrote me a formal Account, that *Dogget* was actually dead. After the firſt Surprize, his Letter gave me, was over, I began to conſider, that this coming from a droll Friend to both of us, might poſſibly be written, to extract ſome Merriment out of my real Belief of it: In this I was not unwilling to gratify him, and return'd an Anſwer, as

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if I had taken the Truth of his News for granted; and was not a little pleas'd, that I had ſo fair an Opportunity of ſpeaking my Mind freely of *Dogget*, which I did, in ſome Favour of his Character; I excus'd his Faults, and was juſt to his Merit. His Law-ſuit with us, I only imputed to his having naturally deceiv'd himſelf in the Juſtice of his Cauſe. What I moſt complain'd of was, his irreconcileable Diſaffection to me, upon it, whom he could not reaſonably blame, for ſtanding in my own Defence; that not to endure me, after it, was a Reflexion upon his Senſe, when all our Acquaintance had been Witneſſes of our former Intimacy; which my Behaviour in his Life-time, had plainly ſhewn him, I had a mind to renew. But ſince he was now gone (however great a Churl he was to me) I was ſorry my Correſpondent had loſt him.

This Part of my Letter, I was ſure, if *Dogget*'s Eyes were ſtill open, would be ſhewn to him; if not, I had only writ it to no purpoſe. But about a Month after, when I came to Town, I had ſome little Reaſon to imagine it had the Effect I wiſh'd from it: For one Day ſitting over-againſt him, at the ſame Coffee-houſe, where we often mixt at the ſame Table, tho' we never exchang'd a ſingle Syllable, he graciouſly extended his Hand, for a Pinch of my Snuff: As this ſeem'd, from him, a ſort of breaking the Ice of his Temper, I took courage upon it, to break Silence on my ſide, and ask'd him how he lik'd it? To which, with a ſlow Heſitation, naturally aſſiſted by the Action of his taking the Snuff, he reply'd ---*Umh! the beſt* --- *Umh!* --- *I have taſted a great while!* ---- If the Reader, who may poſſibly think all this extremely trifling, will conſider, that Trifles ſometimes ſhew Characters in as ſtrong a Light, as Facts of more ſerious Importance, I am in hopes he may allow, that my Matter leſs needs an Excuſe, than the Excuſe itſelf does; if not, I muſt ſtand condemn'd at the end of my Story. ------- But let me go on.

After a few Days of theſe coy, Lady-like Compliances, on his ſide, we grew into a more converſable Temper: At laſt, I took a proper Occaſion, and deſired he would be ſo frank with me, as to let me know, what was his real Diſlike, or Motive, that made him throw up ſo good an Income, as his Share with us annually brought him in? For tho' by our Admiſſion of *Booth*, it might not probably amount to ſo much by a Hundred, or two a Year, as formerly; yet the Remainder was too conſiderable, to be quarrel'd with, and was likely to continue more, than the beſt Actors before us, had ever got, by the Stage. And farther, to encourage him to be open, I told him, If I had done any thing, that had particularly diſoblig'd him, I was ready, if he could put me in the way, to make him any amends in my Power; if not, I deſired he would be ſo juſt to himſelf, as to let me know the real Truth, without Reſerve: But Reſerve he could not, from his natural Temper, eaſily ſhake off. All he ſaid came from him, by half Sentences, and *Inuendos*, as --- No, he had not taken any thing particularly ill ---- for his Part, he was very eaſy, as he was; but where others were to diſpoſe of his Property as they pleaſed --- if you had ſtood it out, as I did, *Booth* might have paid a better Price for it. --- You were too much afraid of the Court --- but that's all over. --- There were other things in the Playhouſe. --- No Man of Spirit. --- In ſhort, to be always peſter'd, and provok'd by a trifling Waſp --- a --- vain --- ſhallow! --- A Man would ſooner beg his Bread, than bear it. ---- (Here it was eaſy to underſtand him: I therefore ask'd him, what he had to bear, that I had not my Share of?) No! it was not the ſame thing, he ſaid. --- You can play with a Bear, or let him alone, and do what he would; but I could not let him lay his Paws upon me, without being hurt; you did not feel him, as I did. --- And for a Man to be cutting of Throats, upon every Trifle, at my time of Day! --- If I had been as covetous, as he thought me, may be I might have born it, as well as you --- but I would not be a Lord of the Treaſury, if ſuch a Temper, as *Wilks*'s, were to be at the Head of it.--- Here,

Here, then, the whole Secret was out. The reſt of our Converſation was but explaining upon it. In a Word, the painful Behaviour of *Wilks* had hurt him ſo ſorely, that the Affair of *Booth* was look'd upon, as much a Relief, as a Grievance, in giving him ſo plauſible a Pretence to get rid of us all, with a better Grace.

Booth too, in a little time, had his Share of the ſame Uneaſineſs, and often complain'd of it to me: Yet as we neither of us could, then, afford to pay *Dogget*'s Price, for our Remedy; all we could do, was to avoid every Occaſion, in our Power, of inflaming the Diſtemper: So that we both agreed, tho' *Wilks*'s Nature was not to be chang'd, it was a leſs Evil to live with him, than without him.

Tho' I had often ſuſpected, from what I had felt myſelf, that the Temper of *Wilks* was *Dogget*'s real Quarrel, to the Stage; yet I could never thoroughly believe it, 'till I had it from his own Mouth. And I, then, thought the Concern he had ſhewn at it was a good deal inconſiſtent with that Underſtanding, which was generally allow'd him. When I give my Reaſons for it, perhaps the Reader will not have a better Opinion of my own: Be that, as it may, I cannot help wondering, that he, who was ſo much more capable of Reflexion, than *Wilks*, could ſacrifice ſo valuable an Income, to his Impatience of another's natural Frailty! And tho' my Stoical way of thinking may be no Rule, for a wiſer Man's Opinion; yet if it ſhould happen to be right, the Reader may make his Uſe of it. Why then ſhould we not always conſider, that the Raſhneſs of Abuſe is but the falſe Reaſon of a weak Man? and that offenſive Terms are only us'd, to ſupply the want of Strength in Argument? Which, as to the common Practice of the ſober World, we do not find, every Man, in Buſineſs, is oblig'd to reſent, with a military Senſe of Honour: Or if he ſhould, would not the Concluſion amount to this? Becauſe another wants Senſe, and Manners, I am oblig'd to be a Madman? For ſuch every Man is, more, or leſs, while the Paſſion of Anger

ger is in Poſſeſſion of him. And what leſs can we call that proud Man, who would put another out of the World, only for putting him out of humour? If Accounts of the Tongue were always to be made up with the Sword, all the Wiſemen in the World might be brought in Debtors, to Blockheads. And when Honour pretends, to be Witneſs, Judge, and Executioner, in its own Cauſe, if Honour were a Man, would it be an Untruth, to ſay Honour is a very impudent Fellow? But in *Dogget*'s Caſe, it may be ask'd, How was he to behave himſelf? Were paſſionate Inſults, to be born, for Years together? To theſe Queſtions, I can only anſwer with two, or three more, Was he to puniſh himſelf, becauſe another was in the wrong? How many ſenſible Husbands endure the teizing Tongue of a froward Wife, only becauſe ſhe is the weaker Veſſel? And why ſhould not a weak Man have the ſame Indulgence? Daily Experience will tell us, that the fretful Temper of a Friend, like the Perſonal Beauty of a fine Lady, by Uſe, and Cohabitation, may be brought down, to give us neither Pain, nor Pleaſure. Such, at leaſt, and no more, was the Diſtreſs I found myſelf in, upon the ſame Provocations, which I generally return'd with humming an Air to my ſelf; or if the Storm grew very high, it might, perhaps, ſometimes ruffle me enough, to ſing a little out of Tune. Thus too (if I had any ill Nature to gratify) I often ſaw the unruly Paſſion of the Aggreſſor's Mind puniſh itſelf, by a reſtleſs Diſorder of the Body.

What inclines me, therefore, to think the Conduct of *Dogget* was as raſh, as the Provocations he complain'd of is, that in ſome time after he had left us, he plainly diſcover'd he had repented it. His Acquaintance obſerv'd to us, that he ſent many a long Look after his Share, in the ſtill proſperous State of the Stage: But, as his Heart was too high to declare (what we ſaw too) his ſhy Inclination to return, he made us no direct Overtures. Nor, indeed, did we care (tho' he was a golden Actor) to pay too dear for him: For as moſt of his Parts had been pretty well ſupply'd,

ply'd, he could not, now, be of his former Value, to us. However to ſhew the Town, at leaſt, that he had not forſworn the Stage, he, one Day, condeſcended, to play for the Benefit of Mrs. *Porter*, in the *Wanton Wife*, at which he knew his late Majeſty was to be preſent. Now (tho' I ſpeak it not of my own Knowledge) yet it was not likely Mrs. *Porter* would have ask'd that Favour of him, without ſome previous Hint, that it would be granted. His coming among us, for that Day only, had a ſtrong appearance of his laying it in our way, to make him Propoſals, or that he hoped the Court, or Town, might intimate to us, their Deſire of ſeeing him oftner: But as he acted only to do a particular Favour, the Menagers ow'd him no Compliment for it, beyond common Civilities. And, as that might not be all he propos'd by it, his farther Views (if he had any) came to nothing. For after this Attempt, he never return'd to the Stage.

To ſpeak of him, as an Actor: He was the moſt an Original, and the ſtricteſt Obſerver of Nature, of all his Contemporaries. He borrow'd from none of them: His Manner was his own: He was a Pattern to others, whoſe greateſt Merit was, that they had ſometimes tolerably imitated him. In dreſſing a Character to the greateſt Exactneſs, he was remarkably skilful; the leaſt Article of whatever Habit he wore, ſeem'd in ſome degree to ſpeak and mark the different Humour he preſented; a neceſſary Care in a Comedian, in which many have been too remiſs, or ignorant. He could be extreamly ridiculous, without ſtepping into the leaſt Impropriety, to make him ſo. His greateſt Succeſs was in Characters of lower Life, which he improv'd, from the Delight he took, in his Obſervations of that Kind, in the real World. In Songs, and particular Dances too, of Humour, he had no Competitor. *Congreve* was a great Admirer of him, and found his Account, in the Characters he expreſly wrote for him. In thoſe of *Fondlewife*, in his *Old Batchelor*; and *Ben*, in *Love for Love*, no Author, and Actor could be more oblig'd to their mutual maſterly Performances. He was very acceptable to ſeveral Perſons of high Rank,

Rank, and Taſte: Tho' he ſeldom car'd to be the Comedian, but among his more intimate Acquaintance.

And now, let me ask the World a Queſtion. When Men have any valuable Qualities, why are the generality of our modern Wits ſo fond of expoſing their Failings only, which the wiſeſt of Mankind will never wholly be free from? Is it of more uſe to the Publick, to know their Errors, than their Perfections? Why is the Account of Life to be ſo unequally ſtated? Tho' a Man may be ſometimes Debtor to Senſe, or Morality, is it not doing him Wrong, not to let the World ſee, at the ſame time, how far he may be Creditor to both? Are Defects and Diſproportions, to be the only labour'd Features in a Portrait? But perhaps ſuch Authors may know how to pleaſe the World better than I do, and may naturally ſuppoſe, that what is delightful to themſelves, may not be diſagreeable to others. For my own part, I confeſs myſelf a little touch'd in Conſcience, at what I have, juſt now, obſerv'd to the Diſadvantage of my other Brother-Menager.

If therefore, in diſcovering the true Cauſe of the Publick's loſing ſo valuable an Actor, as *Dogget*, I have been oblig'd to ſhew the Temper of *Wilks*, in its natural Complexion, ought I not, in amends, and balance of his Imperfections, to ſay at the ſame time of him, That if he was not the moſt correct, or judicious, yet (as *Hamlet* ſays of the King his Father) *Take him* for *All, in All*, &c. he was certainly the moſt diligent, moſt laborious, and moſt uſeful Actor, that I have ſeen upon the Stage, in Fifty Years.

CHAP. XV.

Sir Richard Steele *ſucceeds* Collier, *in the Theatre-Royal.* Lincolns-Inn-Fields *Houſe rebuilt. The Patent reſtored. Eight Actors at once deſert, from the King's Company. Why. A new Patent obtain'd, by Sir* Richard Steele, *and aſſign'd in Shares, to the menaging Actors of* Drury-Lane. *Of modern Pantomimes. The Riſe of them. Vanity invincible, and aſham'd. The* Non-juror *acted. The Author, not forgiven; and rewarded for it.*

UPON the Death of the Queen, Plays (as they always had been on the like Occaſions) were ſilenc'd for ſix Weeks. But this happening on the firſt of *Auguſt*, in the long Vacation of the Theatre, the Obſervance of that Ceremony, which at another Juncture would have fallen like wet Weather upon their Harveſt, did them now no particular Damage. Their Licenſe however being of courſe to be renewed, that Vacation gave the Menagers Time to caſt about, for the better Alteration of it: And ſince they knew the Penſion of ſeven hundred a Year, which had been levied upon them for *Collier*, muſt ſtill be paid to ſomebody, they imagin'd the Merit of a *Whig* might now have as good a Chance for getting into it, as that of a *Tory* had for being continued in it? Having no Obligations, therefore, to *Collier*, who had made the laſt Penny of them; they applied themſelves to Sir *Richard Steele*, who had diſtinguiſh'd himſelf, by his Zeal for the Houſe of *Hanover*, and had been expell'd the Houſe of Commons, for carrying it (as was judg'd at a certain Criſis) into a Reproach of the Government. This we knew was his Pretenſion to that Favour, in which he now ſtood, at Court: We knew too, the Obligations the Stage had to his Writings; there being

ſcarce a Comedian of Merit, in our whole Company, whom his *Tatlers* had not made better, by his publick Recommendation of them. And many Days had our Houſe been particularly fill'd, by the Influence, and Credit of his Pen. Obligations of this kind from a Gentleman, with whom they all had the Pleaſure of a perſonal Intimacy, the Menagers thought could not be more juſtly return'd, than by ſhewing him ſome warm Inſtance of their Deſire, to have him, at the Head of them. We therefore beg'd him to uſe his Intereſt, for the Renewal of our Licenſe, and that he would do us the Honour of getting our Names to ſtand with His, in the ſame Commiſſion. This, we told him, would put it ſtill farther into his Power of ſupporting the Stage, in that Reputation, to which his Lucubrations had already ſo much contributed; and that therefore we thought no Man had better Pretences to partake of its Succeſs.

Though it may be no Addition to the favourable Part of this Gentleman's Character, to ſay with what Pleaſure he receiv'd this Mark of our Inclination to him, yet my Vanity longs to tell you, that it ſurpriz'd him into an Acknowledgment, that People, who are ſhy of Obligations, are cautious of confeſſing. His Spirits took ſuch a lively Turn upon it, that had we been all his own Sons, no unexpected Act of filial Duty could have more endear'd us to him.

It muſt be obſerv'd, then, that as *Collier* had no Share, in any Part of our Property, no Difficulties, from that Quarter, could obſtruct this Propoſal. And the uſual Time of our beginning to act for the Winter-Seaſon, now drawing near, we preſs'd him not to loſe any Time in his Sollicitation of this new Licenſe. Accordingly Sir *Richard* apply'd himſelf to the Duke of *Malborough*, the Hero of his Heart, who, upon the firſt mention of it, obtain'd it of his Majeſty, for Sir *Richard*, and the former Menagers, who were Actors. *Collier* we heard no more of.

The Court, and Town, being crowded very early, in the Winter-Seaſon, upon the critical Turn of Affairs, ſo much expected

pected from the *Hanover* Succeſſion, the Theatre had its particular Share of that general Bleſſing, by a more than ordinary Concourſe of Spectators.

About this Time the Patentee, having very near finiſh'd his Houſe, in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, began to think of forming a new Company; and in the mean Time, found it neceſſary to apply for Leave to employ them. By the weak Defence he had always made againſt the ſeveral Attacks upon his Intereſt, and former Government of the Theatre, it might be a Queſtion, if his Houſe had been ready, in the Queen's Time, whether he would, then, have had the Spirit to ask, or Intereſt enough to obtain Leave to uſe it: But in the following Reign, as it did not appear he had done any thing to forfeit the Right of his Patent, he prevail'd with Mr. *Craggs* the younger, (afterwards Secretary of State) to lay his Caſe before the King, which he did in ſo effectual a manner, that (as Mr. *Craggs* himſelf told me) his Majeſty was pleas'd to ſay upon it, "That he remember'd, when he had been in "*England* before, in King *Charles* his Time, there had been "Two Theatres in *London*; and as the Patent ſeem'd to be a "lawful Grant, he ſaw no Reaſon, why Two Play-houſes might "not be continued."

The Suſpenſion of the Patent being thus taken off, the younger Multitude ſeem'd to call aloud for two Play-houſes! Many deſired another, from the common Notion, that *Two* would always create Emulation, in the Actors (an Opinion, which I have conſider'd in a former Chapter.) Others too, were as eager for them, from the natural Ill-will that follows the Fortunate, or Proſperous, in any Undertaking. Of this low Malevolence we had, now and then, had remarkable Inſtances; we had been forced to diſmiſs an Audience of a hundred and fifty Pounds, from a Diſturbance ſpirited up, by obſcure People, who never gave any better Reaſon for it, than that it was their Fancy, to ſupport the idle Complaint of one rival Actreſs, againſt another, in their ſeveral Pretenſions to the chief Part in a new Tragedy.

But as this Tumult ſeem'd only to be the Wantonneſs of *Engliſh* Liberty, I ſhall not preſume to lay any farther Cenſure upon it.

Now, notwithſtanding this publick Deſire of re-eſtabliſhing two Houſes; and though I have allow'd the former Actors greatly our Superiors; and the Menagers I am ſpeaking of, not to have been without their private Errors. Yet, under all theſe Diſadvantages, it is certain, the Stage, for twenty Years before this time, had never been in ſo flouriſhing a Condition: And it was as evident to all ſenſible Spectators, that this Proſperity could be only owing to that better Order, and cloſer Induſtry, now daily obſerv'd; and which had formerly been neglected by our Predeceſſors. But that I may not impoſe upon the Reader a Merit, which was not generally allow'd us, I ought honeſtly to let him know, that about this time, the publick Papers, particularly *Miſt*'s Journal, took upon them very often to cenſure our Menagement, with the ſame Freedom, and Severity, as if we had been ſo many Miniſters of State: But ſo it happen'd, that theſe unfortunate Reformers of the World, theſe ſelf-appointed *Cenſors* hardly ever hit upon what was really wrong, in us; but taking up Facts upon Truſt, or Hear-ſay, piled up many a pompous Paragraph, that they had ingeniouſly conceiv'd was ſufficient to demoliſh our Adminiſtration, or at leaſt, to make us very uneaſy in it; which, indeed, had ſo far its Effect, that my equally-injur'd Brethren *Wilks*, and *Booth*, often complain'd to me of theſe diſagreeable Aſperſions, and 'propos'd, that ſome publick Anſwer might be made to them, which I always oppos'd, by perhaps, too ſecure a Contempt of what ſuch Writers could do to hurt us; and my Reaſon for it was, that I knew but of one way to ſilence Authors of that Stamp; which was, to grow inſignificant, and good for nothing, and then we ſhould hear no more of them: But while we continued in the Proſperity of pleaſing others, and were not conſcious of having deſerv'd what they ſaid of us, why ſhould we gratify the little Spleen of our Enemies, by

by wincing at it, or give them freſh Opportunities to dine upon any Reply they might make to our publickly taking Notice of them? And though Silence might, in ſome Caſes, be a ſign of Guilt, or Error confeſs'd, our Accuſers were ſo low, in their Credit and Senſe, that the Content we gave the Publick, almoſt every Day, from the Stage, ought to be our only Anſwer to them.

However (as I have obſerv'd) we made many Blots, which theſe unskilful Gameſters never hit: But the Fidelity of an Hiſtorian, cannot be excus'd the Omiſſion of any Truth, which might make for the other Side of the Queſtion. I ſhall therefore confeſs a Fact, which, if a happy Accident had not intervened, had brought our Affairs, into a very tottering Condition. This too, is that Fact, which in a former Chapter, I promis'd to ſet forth as a Sea-Mark of Danger, to future Menagers, in their Theatrical Courſe of Government.

When the new-built Theatre, in *Lincolns-Inn Fields* was ready to be open'd, ſeven or eight Actors, in one Day, deſerted from us, to the Service of the Enemy, which oblig'd us to poſtpone many of our beſt Plays, for want of ſome inferior Part in them, which theſe Deſerters had been uſed to fill: But the Indulgence of the Royal Family, who then frequently honour'd us, by their Preſence, was pleas'd to accept of whatever could be haſtily got ready for their Entertainment. And though this critical good Fortune prevented, in ſome meaſure, our Audiences falling ſo low, as otherwiſe they might have done, yet it was not ſufficient to keep us in our former Proſperity: For that Year, our Profits amounted not to above a third Part of our uſual Dividends; though in the following Year we intirely recover'd them. The Chief of theſe Deſerters were *Keene*, *Bullock*, *Pack*, *Leigh*, Son of the famous *Tony Leigh*, and others of leſs note. 'Tis true, they none of them had more than a negative Merit, in being only able to do us more Harm by their leaving us, without Notice, than they could do us Good, by remaining with us:

For

For though the beſt of them could not ſupport a Play, the worſt of them, by their Abſence, could maim it; as the Loſs of the leaſt Pin, in a Watch, may obſtruct its Motion. But to come to the true Cauſe of their Deſertion: After my having diſcover'd the (long unknown) Occaſion that drove *Dogget* from the Stage, before his ſettled Inclination to leave it; it will be leſs incredible, that theſe Actors, upon the firſt Opportunity to relieve themſelves, ſhould all, in one Day, have left us from the ſame Cauſe of Uneaſineſs. For, in a little time after, upon not finding their Expectations anſwer'd, in *Lincolns-Inn-Fields*, ſome of them, who ſeem'd to anſwer for the reſt, told me, the greateſt Grievance they had, in our Company, was the ſhocking Temper of *Wilks*, who, upon every, almoſt no Occaſion, let looſe the unlimited Language of Paſſion upon them, in ſuch a manner as their Patience was not longer able to ſupport. This, indeed, was what we could not juſtify! This was a Secret, that might have made a wholeſome Paragraph, in a critical News-Paper! But as it was our good Fortune, that it came not to the Ears of our Enemies, the Town was not entertain'd, with their publick Remarks upon it.

After this new Theatre had enjoy'd that ſhort Run of Favour, which is apt to follow Novelty; their Audiences began to flag: But whatever good Opinion we had of our own Merit, we had not ſo good a one of the Multitude, as to depend too much upon the Delicacy of their Taſte: We knew too, that this Company being ſo much nearer to the City, than we were, would intercept many an honeſt Cuſtomer, that might not know a good Market, from a bad one; and that the thinneſt of their Audiences, muſt be always taking ſomething from the Meaſure of our Profits. All theſe Diſadvantages, with many others, we were forced to lay before Sir *Richard Steele*, and farther to remonſtrate to him, that as he now ſtood in *Collier*'s Place, his Penſion of 700*l.* was liable to the ſame Conditions, that *Collier* had receiv'd it upon; which were, that it ſhould be only payable

able during our being the only Company permitted to act, but in caſe another ſhould be ſet up againſt us, that then this Penſion was to be liquidated into an equal Share with us; and which we now hoped he would be contented with. While we were offering to proceed, Sir *Richard* ſtopt us ſhort, by aſſuring us, that as he came among us, by our own Invitation, he ſhould always think himſelf oblig'd, to come into any Meaſures, for our Eaſe, and Service: That to be a Burthen to our Induſtry, would be more diſagreeable to him, than it could be to us; and as he had always taken a Delight, in his Endeavours for our Proſperity, he ſhould be ſtill ready on our own Terms, to continue them. Every one who knew Sir *Richard Steele*, in his Proſperity (before the Effects of his Good-nature had brought him to Diſtreſſes) knew that this was his manner of dealing with his Friends, in Buſineſs: Another Inſtance of the ſame nature will immediately fall in my way.

When we propos'd to put this Agreement, into Writing, he deſired us not to hurry ourſelves; for that he was adviſ'd, upon the late Deſertion of our Actors, to get our Licenſe (which only ſubſiſted during Pleaſure) enlarg'd into a more ample, and durable Authority, and which he ſaid he had reaſon to think would be more eaſily obtain'd, if we were willing, that a Patent for the ſame purpoſe might be granted to Him only, for his Life, and three Years after, which he would then aſſign over to us. This was a Proſpect beyond our Hopes; and what we had long wiſh'd for; for tho' I cannot ſay, we had ever Reaſon to grieve at the Perſonal Severities, or Behaviour, of any one Lord-Chamberlain, in my Time, yet the ſeveral Officers, under them, who had not the Hearts of Noblemen, often treated us (to uſe *Shakeſpear*'s Expreſſion) with all the *Inſolence* of *Office*, that narrow Minds are apt to be elated with; but a Patent, we knew, would free us from ſo abject a State of Dependency. Accordingly, we deſired Sir *Richard* to loſe no time; he was immediately promis'd it: In the Interim, we ſounded the Inclination of the Actors remaining with

with us; who had all Senſe enough to know, that the Credit, and Reputation we ſtood in, with the Town, could not but be a better Security for their Sallaries, than the Promiſe of any other Stage, put into Bonds, could make good to them. In a few Days after, Sir *Richard* told us, that his Majeſty being appriſed that others had a joint Power with him, in the Licenſe, it was expected, we ſhould, under our Hands, ſignify, that his Petition for a Patent was preferr'd, by the Conſent of us all. Such an Acknowledment was immediately ſign'd, and the Patent thereupon paſs'd the Great Seal; for which I remember the Lord-Chancellor *Cooper*, in Compliment to Sir *Richard*, would receive no Fee.

We receiv'd the Patent *January* 19, 1718, and (Sir *Richard* being oblig'd the next Morning to ſet out for *Burrowbridge* in *Yorkſhire*, where he was ſoon after elected Member for the new Parliament) we were forc'd that very Night, to draw up in a hurry ('till our Counſel might more adviſably perfect it) his Aſſignment to us of equal Shares, in the Patent, with farther Conditions of Partnerſhip: But here I ought to take Shame to myſelf, and at the ſame time to give this ſecond Inſtance of the Equity, and Honour of Sir *Richard*: For this Aſſignment (which I had myſelf the haſty Penning of) was ſo worded, that it gave Sir *Richard* as equal a Title to our Property, as it had given us to his Authority in the Patent: But Sir *Richard*, notwithſtanding, when he return'd to Town, took no Advantage of the Miſtake, and conſented in our ſecond Agreement, to pay us Twelve Hundred Pounds, to be equally intitled to our Property, which at his Death, we were oblig'd to repay (as we afterwards did) to his Executors; and which, in caſe any of us had died before him, the Survivors were equally oblig'd to have paid to the Executors of ſuch deceaſed Perſon, upon the ſame Account. But Sir *Richard*'s Moderation with us, was rewarded with the Reverſe of *Collier*'s Stiffneſs: *Collier*, by inſiſting on his Penſion, loſt Three Hundred Pounds a Year; and Sir *Richard*, by his accepting a

Share

Share in lieu of it, was, one Year with another, as much a Gainer.

The Grant of this Patent having aſſur'd us of a competent Term, to be relied on, we were now emboldened, to lay out larger Sums, in the Decorations of our Plays: Upon the Revival of *Dryden*'s *All for Love*, the Habits of that Tragedy amounted to an Expence of near Six Hundred Pounds; a Sum unheard of, for many Years before, on the like Occaſions. But we thought ſuch extraordinary Marks of our Acknowledgment were due to the Favours, which the Publick were now, again pouring in upon us. About this time we were ſo much in faſhion, and follow'd, that our Enemies (who they were, it would not be fair to gueſs, for we never knew them) made their Puſh of a good round Lye upon us, to terrify thoſe Auditors, from our Support, whom they could not miſlead by their private Arts, or publick Invectives. A current Report, that the Walls, and Roof of our Houſe, were liable to fall, had got ſuch ground in the Town, that on a ſudden, we found our Audiences unuſually decreas'd by it: *Wilks* was immediately for denouncing War, and Vengeance on the Author of this Falſhood, and for offering a Reward, to whoever could diſcover him. But it was thought more neceſſary firſt to diſprove the Falſhood, and then to pay what Compliments might be thought adviſeable to the Author. Accordingly an Order from the King was obtain'd, to have our Tenement ſurvey'd by Sir *Thomas Hewit*, then the proper Officer; whoſe Report of its being in a ſafe, and ſound Condition, and ſign'd by him, was publiſh'd in every News-Paper. This had ſo immediate an Effect, that our Spectators, whoſe Apprehenſions had lately kept them abſent, now made up our Loſſes, by returning to us, with a freſh Inclination, and in greater Numbers.

When it was firſt publickly known, that the New Theatre would be open'd againſt us; I cannot help going a little back to remember the Concern that my Brother-Menagers expreſs'd at

what might be the Conſequences of it. They imagin'd, that now, all thoſe who wiſh'd Ill to us, and particularly a great Party, who had been diſoblig'd, by our ſhutting them out, from behind our Scenes, even to the Refuſal of their Mony, would now exert themſelves, in any partial, or extravagant Meaſures, that might either hurt us, or ſupport our Competitors: Theſe too were ſome of thoſe farther Reaſons, which had diſcourag'd them, from running the hazard of continuing to Sir *Richard Steele* the ſame Penſion, which had been paid to *Collier*. Upon all which I obſerved to them, that for my own Part, I had not the ſame Apprehenſions; but that I foreſaw as many good, as bad Conſequences from two Houſes: That tho' the Novelty might poſſibly at firſt abate a little of our Profits; yet if we ſlacken'd not our Induſtry, that Loſs would be amply balanc'd, by an equal Increaſe of our Eaſe, and Quiet: That thoſe turbulent Spirits which were always moleſting us, would now have other Employment: That the queſtion'd Merit of our Acting would now ſtand in a clearer Light, when others were faintly compared to us: That tho' Faults might be found, with the beſt Actors, that ever were, yet the egregious Defects, that would appear in others, would now be the effectual means to make our Superiority ſhine, if we had any Pretence to it: And that what ſome People hoped might ruin us, would in the end reduce them to give up the Diſpute, and reconcile them to thoſe who could beſt entertain them.

In every Article of this Opinion, they afterwards found I had not been deceiv'd; and the Truth of it may be ſo well remember'd by many living Spectators, that it would be too frivolous and needleſs a Boaſt, to give it any farther Obſervation.

But, in what I have ſaid, I would not be underſtood to be an Advocate, for two Playhouſes: For we ſhall ſoon find that two Sets of Actors, tolerated in the ſame Place, have conſtantly ended in the Corruption of the Theatre; of which the auxiliary Entertainments, that have ſo barbarouſly ſupply'd the Defects of weak

weak Action, have for ſome Years paſt, been a flagrant Inſtance; it may not therefore, be here improper to ſhew how our childiſh Pantomimes firſt came to take ſo groſs a Poſſeſſion of the Stage.

I have upon ſeveral Occaſions already obſerv'd, that when one Company is too hard for another, the lower, in Reputation, has always been forc'd to exhibit ſome new-fangled Foppery, to draw the Multitude after them: Of theſe Expedients, Singing and Dancing had formerly been the moſt effectual; but, at the Time I am ſpeaking of, our *Engliſh* Muſick had been ſo diſcountenanc'd, ſince the Taſte of *Italian* Operas prevail'd, that it was to no purpoſe, to pretend to it. Dancing therefore was, now, the only Weight in the oppoſite Scale, and as the New Theatre ſometimes found their Account in it, it could not be ſafe for us, wholly to neglect it. To give even Dancing therefore ſome Improvement, and to make it ſomething more than Motion without Meaning, the Fable of *Mars* and *Venus*, was form'd into a connected Preſentation of Dances in Character, wherein the Paſſions were ſo happily expreſs'd, and the whole Story ſo intelligibly told, by a mute Narration of Geſture only, that even thinking Spectators allow'd it both a pleaſing, and a rational Entertainment; tho', at the ſame time, from our Diſtruſt of its Reception, we durſt not venture to decorate it, with any extraordinary Expence of Scenes, or Habits; but upon the Succeſs of this Attempt, it was rightly concluded, that if a viſible Expence in both, were added to ſomething of the ſame Nature, it could not fail of drawing the Town proportionably after it. From this original Hint then (but every way unequal to it) ſprung forth that Succeſſion of monſtrous Medlies, that have ſo long infeſted the Stage, and which aroſe upon one another alternately, at both Houſes outvying, in Expence, like contending Bribes on both ſides at an Election, to ſecure a Majority of the Multitude. But ſo it is, Truth may complain, and Merit murmur with what Juſtice it may, the Few will never be a Match for the Many,

unleſs Authority ſhould think fit to interpoſe, and put down theſe Poetical Drams, theſe Gin-ſhops of the Stage, that intoxicate its Auditors, and diſhonour their Underſtanding, with a Levity, for which I want a Name.

If I am ask'd (after my condemning theſe Fooleries, myſelf) how I came to aſſent, or continue my Share of Expence to them? I have no better Excuſe for my Error, than confeſſing it. I did it againſt my Conſcience! and had not virtue enough to ſtarve, by oppoſing a Multitude, that would have been too hard for me. Now let me ask an odd Queſtion: Had *Harry the Fourth* of *France* a better Excuſe, for changing his Religion? I was ſtill in my Heart, as much as he could be, on the ſide of Truth and Senſe, but with this difference, that I had their leave to quit them, when they could not ſupport me: For what Equivalent could I have found for my falling a Martyr to them? How far the Heroe, or the Comedian, was in the wrong, let the Clergy, and the Criticks decide. Neceſſity will be as good a Plea for the one, as the other. But let the Queſtion go which way it will, *Harry* IV. has been always allow'd a Great Man: And what I want of his Grandeur, you ſee by the Inference, Nature has amply ſupply'd to me, in Vanity; a Pleaſure which neither the Pertneſs of Wit, or the Gravity of Wiſdom, will ever perſuade me to part with. And why is there not as much Honeſty in owning, as in concealing it? For though to hide it may be Wiſdom, to be without it is impoſſible; and where is the Merit of keeping a Secret, which every Body is let into? To ſay we have no Vanity then, is ſhewing a great deal of it; as to ſave we *have* a great deal, cannot be ſhewing ſo much: And tho', there may be Art, in a Man's accuſing himſelf, even then it will be more pardonable, than Self-commendation. Do we not find, that even good Actions have their Share of it? that it is as inſeparable, from our Being, as our Nakedneſs? And tho' it may be equally decent to cover it, yet the wiſeſt Man can no more be without it, than the weakeſt can believe he was born,

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in his Cloaths. If then what we ſay of ourſelves be true, and not prejudicial to others, to be called vain upon it, is no more a Reproach, than to be called a brown, or a fair Man. Vanity is of all Complexions; 'tis the growth of every Clime, and Capacity; Authors of all Ages have had a Tincture of it; and yet you read *Horace*, *Montaign*, and Sir *William Temple*, with Pleaſure. Nor am I ſure, if it were curable by Precept, that Mankind would be mended by it! Could Vanity be eradicated, from our Nature, I am afraid, that the Reward of moſt human Virtues, would not be found, in this World! And happy is he, who has no greater Sin to anſwer for, in the next!

But what is all this to the Theatrical Follies I was talking of? Perhaps not a great deal; but it is to my Purpoſe; for though I am an Hiſtorian, I do not write to the Wiſe, and Learned only; I hope to have Readers of no more Judgment, than ſome of my *quondam* Auditors; and I am afraid they will be as hardly contented, with dry Matters of Fact, as with a plain Play, without Entertainments: This Rhapſody, therefore, has been thrown in, as a Dance between the Acts, to make up for the Dullneſs of what would have been by itſelf only proper. But I now come to my Story again.

Notwithſtanding, then, this our Compliance with the vulgar Taſte; we generally made uſe of theſe Pantomimes, but as Crutches to our weakeſt Plays: Nor were we ſo loſt to all Senſe of what was valuable, as to diſhonour our beſt Authors, in ſuch bad Company: We had ſtill a due Reſpect to ſeveral ſelect Plays, that were able to be their own Support; and in which we found our conſtant Account, without painting, and patching them out, like Proſtitutes, with theſe Follies, in faſhion: If therefore we were not ſo ſtrictly chaſte, in the other part of our Conduct, let the Error of it ſtand among the ſilly Conſequences of Two Stages. Could the Intereſt of both Companies have been united, in one only Theatre; I had been one of the Few, that would have us'd my utmoſt Endeavour of never admitting

to

to the Stage any Spectacle, that ought not to have been ſeen there; the Errors of my own Plays, which I could not ſee, excepted. And though probably, the Majority of Spectators would not have been ſo well pleas'd with a Theatre ſo regulated; yet Senſe, and Reaſon cannot loſe their intrinſick Value, becauſe the Giddy, and the Ignorant, are blind and deaf, or numerous; and I cannot help ſaying, it is a Reproach to a ſenſible People, to let Folly ſo publickly govern their Pleaſures.

While I am making this grave Declaration of what I *would* have done, had One only Stage been continued; to obtain an eaſier Belief of my Sincerity, I ought to put my Reader in mind of what I *did* do, even after Two Companies were again eſtabliſh'd.

About this Time *Jacobitiſm* had lately exerted itſelf, by the moſt unprovoked Rebellion, that our Hiſtories have handed down to us, ſince the *Norman* Conqueſt: I therefore thought that to ſet the Authors, and Principles of that deſperate Folly in a fair Light, by allowing the miſtaken Conſciences of ſome their beſt Excuſe, and by making the artful Pretenders to Conſcience, as ridiculous, as they were ungratefully wicked, was a Subject fit for the honeſt Satire of Comedy, and what might, if it ſucceeded, do Honour to the Stage, by ſhewing the valuable Uſe of it. And conſidering what Numbers, at that time, might come to it, as prejudic'd Spectators, it may be allow'd that the Undertaking was not leſs hazardous, than laudable.

To give Life, therefore, to this Deſign, I borrow'd the *Tartuffe* of *Moliere*, and turn'd him, into a modern *Nonjuror:* Upon the Hypocriſy of the *French* Character, I ingrafted a ſtronger Wickedneſs, that of an *Engliſh* Popiſh Prieſt, lurking under the Doctrine of our own Church, to raiſe his Fortune, upon the Ruin of a worthy Gentleman, whom his diſſembled Sanctity had ſeduc'd into the treaſonable Cauſe of a *Roman Catholick* Out-law. How this Deſign, in the Play, was executed, I refer to the Readers of it; it cannot be mended, by any critical Remarks,

marks, I can make, in its favour: Let it ſpeak for it ſelf. All the Reaſon I had to think it no bad Performance, was, that it was acted eighteen Days running, and that the Party, that were hurt by it (as I have been told) have not been the ſmalleſt Number of my back Friends ever ſince. But happy was it for this Play, that the very Subject was its Protection; a few Smiles of ſilent Contempt were the utmoſt Diſgrace, that on the firſt Day of its Appearance it was thought ſafe to throw upon it; as the Satire was chiefly employ'd on the Enemies of the Government, they were not ſo hardy, as to own themſelves ſuch, by any higher Diſapprobation, or Reſentment. But as it was then probable I might write again, they knew it would not be long before they might with more Security give a Looſe to their Spleen, and make up Accounts with me. And to do them Juſtice, in every Play I afterwards produced, they paid me the Balance, to a Tittle. But to none was I more beholden, than that celebrated Author Mr. *Miſt*, whoſe *Weekly Journal*, for about fifteen Years following, ſcarce ever fail'd of paſſing ſome of his Party Compliments upon me: The State, and the Stage, were his frequent Parallels, and the Miniſter, and *Minheer Keiber* the Menager, were as conſtantly droll'd upon: Now, for my own Part, though I could never perſuade my Wit to have an open Account with him (for as he had no Effects of his own, I did not think myſelf oblig'd to anſwer his Bills) Notwithſtanding, I will be ſo charitable to his real *Manes*, and to the Aſhes of his Paper, as to mention one particular Civility, he paid to my Memory, after he thought he had ingeniouſly kill'd me. Soon after the *Nonjuror* had receiv'd the Favour of the Town, I read, in one of his Journals, the following ſhort Paragraph, *viz. Yeſterday died Mr.* Colley Cibber, *late Comedian of the Theatre-Royal, notorious for writing the* Nonjuror. The Compliment, in the latter part, I confeſs, I did not diſlike, becauſe it came from ſo impartial a Judge; and it really ſo happen'd, that the former part of it was very near being true; for I had that very Day juſt crawled out,

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after having been ſome Weeks laid up by a Fever: However, I ſaw no uſe, in being thought to be thoroughly dead, before my Time, and therefore had a mind to ſee, whether the Town cared to have me alive again: So the Play of the *Orphan* being to be acted that Day, I quietly ſtole myſelf into the Part of the *Chaplain*, which I had not been ſeen in, for many Years before. The Surprize of the Audience at my unexpected Appearance on the very Day, I had been dead in the News, and the Paleneſs of my Looks, ſeem'd to make it a Doubt, whether I was not the Ghoſt, of my real Self departed: But when I ſpoke, their Wonder eas'd itſelf by an Applauſe; which convinc'd me, they were then ſatisfied, that my Friend *Miſt* had told a *Fib* of me. Now, if ſimply to have ſhewn myſelf in broad Life, and about my Buſineſs, after he had *notoriouſly* reported me dead, can be called a Reply, it was the only one, which his Paper, while alive, ever drew from me. How far I may be vain, then, in ſuppoſing that this Play brought me into the Diſfavour of ſo many Wits, and valiant Auditors, as afterwards appear'd againſt me, let thoſe who may think it worth their Notice, judge. In the mean time, till I can find a better Excuſe for their, ſometimes particular, Treatment of me, I cannot eaſily give up my Suſpicion: And if I add a more remarkable Fact, that afterwards confirm'd me in it, perhaps it may incline others to join in my Opinion.

On the firſt Day of the *Provok'd Husband*, ten Years after the *Nonjuror* had appear'd; a powerful Party, not having the Fear of publick Offence, or private Injury before their Eyes, appear'd moſt impetuouſly concern'd for the Demolition of it; in which they ſo far ſucceeded, that for ſome Time I gave it up for loſt; and to follow their Blows, in the publick Papers of the next Day, it was attack'd, and triumph'd over, as a dead, and damn'd Piece; a ſwinging Criticiſm was made upon it, in general invective Terms, for they diſdain'd to trouble the World with Particulars; their Sentence, it ſeems, was Proof enough of its deſerving the Fate it had met with. But this damn'd Play was, not-

notwithſtanding, acted twenty-eight Nights together, and left off, at a Receipt of upwards of a hundred and forty Pounds, which happen'd to be more, than in fifty Years before, could be then ſaid, of any one Play whatſoever.

Now, if ſuch notable Behaviour could break out upon ſo ſucceſsful a Play (which too, upon the Share Sir *John Vanbrugh* had in it, I will venture to call a good one) what ſhall we impute it to? Why may not I plainly ſay, it was not the Play, but Me, who had a Hand in it, they did not like? And for what Reaſon? if they were not aſham'd of it, why did not they publiſh it? No! the Reaſon had publiſh'd itſelf, I was the Author of the *Nonjuror!* But, perhaps, of all Authors, I ought not to make this ſort of Complaint, becauſe I have Reaſon to think, that that particular Offence has made me more honourable Friends than Enemies; the latter of which I am not unwilling ſhould know (however unequal the Merit may be to the Reward) that Part of the Bread I now eat, was given me, for having writ the *Nonjuror.*

And yet I cannot but lament with many quiet Spectators, the helpleſs Misfortune, that has ſo many Years attended the Stage! That no Law has had Force enough to give it abſolute Protection! for till we can civilize its Auditors, the Authors, that write for it, will ſeldom have a greater Call to it, than Neceſſity; and how unlikely is the Imagination of the Needy, to inform, or delight the many, in Affluence? or how often does Neceſſity make many unhappy Gentlemen turn Authors, in ſpite of Nature?

What a Bleſſing, therefore, is it! what an enjoy'd Deliverance! after a Wretch has been driven by Fortune, to ſtand ſo many wanton Buffets of unmanly Fierceneſs, to find himſelf at laſt, quietly lifted above the Reach of them!

But let not this Reflection fall upon my Auditors, without Diſtinction; for though Candour, and Benevolence, are ſilent Virtues, they are as viſible, as the moſt vociferous Ill-nature; and I confeſs, the Publick has given me more frequent Reaſon to be thankful, than to complain.

CHAP. XVI.

The Author ſteps out of his Way. Pleads his Theatrical Cauſe, in Chancery. Carries it. Plays acted at Hampton-Court. *Theatrical Anecdotes in former Reigns. Miniſters, and Menagers always cenſur'd. The Difficulty of ſupplying the Stage, with good Actors, conſider'd. Courtiers, and Comedians govern'd by the ſame Paſſions. Examples of both. The Author quits the Stage. Why.*

HAVING brought the Government of the Stage through ſuch various Changes, and Revolutions, to this ſettled State, in which it continued to almoſt the Time of my leaving it; it cannot be ſuppos'd, that a Period of ſo much Quiet, and ſo long a Train of Succeſs, (though happy for thoſe, who enjoy'd it) can afford ſuch Matter of Surprize, or Amuſement, as might ariſe, from Times of more Diſtreſs, and Diſorder. A quiet Time, in Hiſtory, like a Calm, in a Voyage, leave us, but in an indolent Station: To talk of our Affairs, when they were no longer ruffled, by Misfortunes, would be a Picture without Shade, a flat Performance, at beſt. As I might, therefore, throw all that tedious Time of our Tranquillity, into one Chaſm, in my Hiſtory, and cut my Way ſhort, at once, to my laſt Exit, from the Stage, I ſhall, at leaſt, fill it up with ſuch Matter only, as I have a Mind ſhould be known, how few ſoever may have Patience to read it: Yet, as I deſpair not of ſome Readers, who may be moſt awake, when they think others have moſt occaſion to ſleep; who may be more pleas'd to find me languid, than lively, or in the wrong, than in the right; why ſhould I ſcruple (when it is ſo eaſy a Matter too) to gratify their particular Taſte,

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by venturing upon any Error, that I like, or the Weakneſs of my Judgment miſleads me to commit? I think too, I have a very good Chance, for my Succeſs, in this paſſive Ambition, by ſhewing myſelf in a Light, I have not been ſeen in.

By your Leave then, Gentlemen! let the Scene open, and, at once, diſcover your Comedian, at the Bar! There you will find him a Defendant, and pleading his own Theatrical Cauſe, in a Court of *Chancery:* But, as I chuſe, to have a Chance of pleaſing others, as well as of indulging you, Gentlemen; I muſt firſt beg leave, to open my Caſe to them; after which, my whole Speech, upon that Occaſion, ſhall be at your Mercy.

In all the Tranſactions of Life, there cannot be a more painful Circumſtance, than a Diſpute at Law, with a Man, with whom we have long liv'd, in an agreeable Amity: But when Sir *Richard Steele*, to get himſelf out of Difficulties, was oblig'd to throw his Affairs, into the Hands of Lawyers, and Truſtees, that Conſideration, then, could be of no weight: The Friend, or the Gentleman, had no more to do in the Matter! Thus, while Sir *Richard* no longer acted, from himſelf, it may be no Wonder, if a Flaw was found in our Conduct, for the Law to make Work with. It muſt be obſerv'd then, that about two, or three Years, before this Suit was commenc'd, upon Sir *Richard*'s totally abſenting himſelf, from all Care, and Menagement of the Stage (which by our Articles of Partnerſhip he was equally, and jointly oblig'd with us, to attend) we were reduc'd to let him know, that we could not go on, at that Rate; but that if he expected to make the Buſineſs a *ſine Cure*, we had as much Reaſon to expect a Conſideration for our extraordinary Care of it; and that during his Abſence, we therefore intended to charge our ſelves at a Sallary of 1 *l.* 13 *s.* 4 *d.* every acting Day (unleſs he could ſhew us Cauſe, to the contrary) for our Menagement: To which, in his compos'd manner, he only anſwer'd; That to be ſure, we knew what was fitter to be done, than he did; that he had always taken a Delight, in making us eaſy, and

had no Reaſon to doubt of our doing him Juſtice. Now whether, under this eaſy Stile of Approbation, he conceal'd any Diſlike of our Reſolution, I cannot ſay. But, if I may ſpeak my private Opinion, I really believe, from his natural Negligence of his Affairs, he was glad, at any rate, to be excus'd an Attendance, which he was now grown weary of. But whether I am deceiv'd, or right in my Opinion, the Fact was truly this, that he never once, directly, nor indirectly, complain'd, or objected to our being paid the above-mention'd daily Sum, in near three Years together; and yet ſtill continued to abſent himſelf from us, and our Affairs. But notwithſtanding, he had ſeen, and done all this with his Eyes open; his Lawyer thought here was ſtill a fair Field, for a Battle, in Chancery, in which, though his Client might be beaten, he was ſure his Bill muſt be paid for it: Accordingly, to work with us he went. But not to be ſo long, as the Lawyers were in bringing this Cauſe to an Iſſue, I ſhall, at once, let you know, that it came to a Hearing, before the late Sir *Joſeph Jekyll*, then Maſter of the Rolls, in the Year 1726. Now, as the chief Point, in diſpute, was, of what Kind, or Importance, the Buſineſs of a Menager was, or in what it principally conſiſted; it could not be ſuppos'd, that the moſt learned Council could be ſo well appris'd of the Nature of it, as one, who had himſelf gone through the Care, and Fatigue of it. I was therefore encourag'd by our Council, to ſpeak to that particular Head myſelf; which I confeſs I was glad he ſuffer'd me to undertake; but when I tell you, that two of the learned Council againſt us, came, afterwards, to be ſucceſſively Lord Chancellors, it ſets my Preſumption in a Light, that I ſtill tremble to ſhew it in: But however, not to aſſume more Merit, from its Succeſs, than was really its Due, I ought fairly to let you know, that I was not ſo hardy, as to deliver my Pleading without Notes, in my Hand, of the Heads I intended to enlarge upon; for though I thought I could conquer my Fear, I could not be ſo ſure of my Memory: But when it came to the critical Moment,

Moment, the Dread, and Apprehenſion of what I had undertaken, ſo diſconcerted my Courage, that though I had been us'd to talk to above Fifty Thouſand different People every Winter, for upwards of Thirty Years together; an involuntary, and unaffected Proof of my Confuſion, fell from my Eyes; and, as I found myſelf quite out of my Element, I ſeem'd rather gaſping for Life, than in a condition to cope with the eminent Orators, againſt me. But however, I ſoon found, from the favourable Attention of my Hearers, that my Diffidence had done me no Diſſervice: And as the Truth, I was to ſpeak to, needed no Ornament of Words, I delivered it, in the plain manner following, *viz.*

In this Cauſe, Sir, I humbly conceive, there are but two Points, that admit of any material Diſpute. The firſt is, Whether Sir *Richard Steele*, is as much oblig'd to do the Duty, and Buſineſs of a Menager, as either *Wilks*, *Booth*, or *Cibber:* And the ſecond is, Whether, by Sir *Richard*'s totally withdrawing himſelf from the Buſineſs of a Menager, the Defendants are juſtifiable, in charging to each of themſelves the 1 *l.* 13 *s.* 4 *d. per Diem*, for their particular Pains, and Care, in carrying on the whole Affairs of the Stage, without any Aſſiſtance from Sir *Richard Steele*.

As to the Firſt, if I don't miſtake the Words of the Aſſignment, there is a Clauſe in it, that ſays, All Matters relating to the Government, or Menagement of the Theatre, ſhall be concluded by a Majority of Voices. Now I preſume, Sir, there is no room left to alledge, that Sir *Richard* was ever refus'd his Voice, though in above three Years, he never deſired, to give it: And I believe there will be as little room to ſay, that he could have a Voice, if he were not a Menager. But, Sir, his being a Menager is ſo ſelf-evident, that it ſeems amazing how he could conceive, that he was to take the Profits, and Advantages of a Menager, without doing the Duty of it. And I will be bold to ſay, Sir, that his Aſſignment of the Patent, to *Wilks*, *Booth*,

and

and *Cibber*, in no one Part of it, by the ſevereſt Conſtruction in the World, can be wreſted to throw the heavy Burthen of the Menagement only upon their Shoulders. Nor does it appear, Sir, that either in his Bill, or in his Anſwer to our Croſs-Bill, he has offer'd, any Hint, or Glimpſe of a Reaſon, for his withdrawing from the Menagement, at all; or ſo much as pretend, from the Time complained of, that he ever took the leaſt part of his Share of it. Now, Sir, however unaccountable this Conduct of Sir *Richard* may ſeem, we will ſtill allow, that he had ſome Cauſe for it; but whether or no, that Cauſe, was a reaſonable one, your Honour will the better judge, if I may be indulg'd in the Liberty of explaining it.

Sir, the Caſe, in plain Truth and Reality, ſtands thus: Sir *Richard*, though no Man alive can write better of Oeconomy than himſelf, yet, perhaps, he is above the Drudgery of practiſing it: Sir *Richard*, then, was often in want of Mony; and while we were in Friendſhip with him, we often aſſiſted his Occaſions: But thoſe Compliances had ſo unfortunate an Effect, that they only heightened his Importunity, to borrow more, and the more we lent, the leſs he minded us, or ſhew'd any Concern for our Welfare. Upon this, Si, we ſtopt our Hands, at once, and peremptorily refus'd to advance another Shilling, 'till by the Balance of our Accounts, it became due to him. And this Treatment (though we hope, not in the leaſt unjuſtifiable) we have reaſon to believe ſo ruffled his Temper, that he at once, was as ſhort with us, as we had been with him; for from that Day, he never more came near us: Nay, Sir, he not only continued to neglect, what he *ſhould* have done, but actually did what he ought *not* to have done: He made an Aſſignment of his Share, without our Conſent, in a manifeſt Breach of our Agreement: For, Sir, we did not lay that Reſtriction upon ourſelves, for no Reaſon: We knew, before-hand, what Trouble, and Inconvenience it would be, to unravel, and expoſe our Accounts to Strangers, who if they were to do us no hurt, by divulging our Secrets,

Secrets, we were ſure could do us no good, by keeping them. If Sir *Richard* had had our common Intereſt at heart, he would have been as warm in it, as we were, and as tender of hurting it: But ſuppoſing his aſſigning his Share to others, may have done us no great Injury, it is at leaſt, a ſhrewd Proof, that he did not care whether it did us any, or no. And if the Clauſe was not ſtrong enough, to reſtrain him from it, in Law, there was enough in it, to have reſtrain'd him, in Honour, from breaking it. But take it, in its beſt Light, it ſhews him as remiſs a Menager, in our Affairs, as he naturally was in his own. Suppoſe, Sir, we had all been as careleſs as himſelf, which I can't find he has any more Right to be, than we have, muſt not our whole Affair have fallen to Ruin? And may we not, by a parity of Reaſon ſuppoſe, that by his Neglect a fourth Part of it *does* fall to Ruin? But, Sir, there is a particular Reaſon to believe, that, from our want of Sir *Richard*, more, than a fourth Part *does* ſuffer by it: His Rank, and Figure, in the World, while he gave us the Aſſiſtance of them, were of extraordinary Service to us: He had an eaſier Acceſs, and a more regarded Audience at Court, than our low Station of Life could pretend to, when our Intereſt wanted (as it often did) a particular Solicitation there. But ſince we have been depriv'd of him, the very End, the very Conſideration of his Share in our Profits, is not perform'd on his Part. And will Sir *Richard*, then, make us no Compenſation, for ſo valuable a Loſs, in our Intereſts, and ſo palpable an Addition to our Labour? I am afraid, Sir, if we were all to be as indolent, in the Menaging-Part, as Sir *Richard* preſumes he has a Right to be; our Patent would ſoon run us, as many Hundreds, in Debt, as he has had (and ſtill ſeems willing to have) his Share of, for doing of nothing.

Sir, our next Point, in queſtion, is whether *Wilks*, *Booth*, and *Cibber*, are juſtifiable, in charging the 1 *l.* 13 *s.* 4 *d. per diem*, for their extraordinary Menagement, in the Abſence of Sir *Richard Steele*. I doubt, Sir, it will be hard to come to the

Solution

Solution of this Point, unleſs we may be a little indulg'd, in ſetting forth, what is the daily, and neceſſary Buſineſs, and Duty of a Menager. But, Sir, we will endeavour to be as ſhort, as the Circumſtances will admit of.

Sir, by our Books, it is apparent, that the Menagers have under their Care, no leſs than One Hundred, and Forty Perſons, in conſtant, daily Pay: And among ſuch Numbers, it will be no wonder, if a great many of them are unskilful, idle, and ſometimes untractable; all which Tempers are to be led, or driven, watch'd, and reſtrain'd by the continual Skill, Care, and Patience of the Menagers. Every Menager, is oblig'd, in his turn, to attend two, or three Hours every Morning, at the Rehearſal of Plays, and other Entertainments for the Stage, or elſe every Rehearſal would be but a rude Meeting of Mirth and Jollity. The ſame Attendance, is as neceſſary at every Play, during the time of its publick Action, in which one, or more of us, have conſtantly been punctual, whether we have had any part, in the Play, then acted, or not. A Menager ought to be at the Reading of every new Play, when it is firſt offer'd to the Stage, tho' there are ſeldom one of thoſe Plays in twenty, which upon hearing, proves to be fit for it, and upon ſuch Occaſions the Attendance muſt be allow'd, to be as painfully tedious, as the getting rid of the Authors of ſuch Plays, muſt be diſagreeable, and difficult. Beſides this, Sir, a Menager is to order all new Cloaths, to aſſiſt in the Fancy, and Propriety of them, to limit the Expence, and to withſtand the unreaſonable Importunities of ſome, that are apt to think themſelves injur'd, if they are not finer than their Fellows. A Menager, is to direct and overſee the Painters, Machiniſts, Muſicians, Singers, and Dancers; to have an Eye upon the Door-keepers, Under-Servants, and Officers, that without ſuch care, are too often apt to defraud us, or neglect their Duty.

And all this, Sir, and more, much more, which we hope will be needleſs to trouble you with, have we done every Day, without

out the leaſt Aſſiſtance from Sir *Richard*, even at times when the Concern, and Labour of our Parts, upon the Stage, have made it very difficult, and irkſome to go thro' with it.

In this Place, Sir, it may be worth obſerving, that Sir *Richard*, in his Anſwer to our Croſs-Bill, ſeems to value himſelf, upon *Cibber*'s confeſſing, in the Dedication of a Play, which he made to Sir *Richard*, that he (Sir *Richard*) had done the Stage very conſiderable Service, by leading the Town to our Plays, and filling our Houſes, by the Force and Influence of his *Tatlers*. But Sir *Richard* forgets, that thoſe *Tatlers* were written in the late Queen's Reign, long before he was admitted to a Share in the Playhouſe: And in truth, Sir, it was our real Senſe of thoſe Obligations, and Sir *Richard*'s aſſuring us they ſhould be continued, that firſt and chiefly inclin'd us to invite him to ſhare the Profits of our Labours, upon ſuch farther Conditions, as in his Aſſignment of the Patent to us, are ſpecified. And, Sir, as *Cibber*'s publick Acknowledgment of thoſe Favours is at the ſame time an equal Proof of Sir *Richard*'s *Power* to continue them; ſo Sir, we hope, it carries an equal Probability, that without his Promiſe to *uſe* that Power, he would never have been thought on, much leſs have been invited by us, into a Joint-Menagement of the Stage, and into a Share of the Profits: And indeed what Pretence could he have form'd, for asking a Patent from the Crown, had he been poſſeſs'd of no eminent Qualities, but in common with other Men? But, Sir, all theſe Advantages, all theſe Hopes, nay Certainties of greater Profits, from thoſe great Qualities, have we been utterly depriv'd of by the wilful, and unexpected Neglect of Sir *Richard*. But we find, Sir, it is a common thing, in the Practice of Mankind, to juſtify one Error, by committing another: For Sir *Richard* has not only refus'd us the extraordinary Aſſiſtance, which he is able, and bound to give us; but on the contrary, to our great Expence, and loſs of Time, now calls us to account, in this Honourable Court, for the Wrong we have done him, in not doing

his Buſineſs of a Menager, for nothing. But, Sir, Sir *Richard* has not met with ſuch Treatment from us: He has not writ Plays for us, for *Nothing*, we paid him very well, and in an extraordinary manner, for his late Comedy of the *Conſcious Lovers*: And though, in writing that Play, he had more Aſſiſtance from one of the Menagers, than becomes me to enlarge upon, of which Evidence has been given upon Oath, by ſeveral of our Actors; yet, Sir, he was allow'd the full, and particular Profits of that Play, as an Author, which amounted to Three Hundred Pounds, beſides about Three Hundred more, which he receiv'd as a Joint-Sharer of the general Profits, that aroſe from it. Now, Sir, though the Menagers are not all of them able to write Plays, yet they have all of them been able to do (I won't ſay, as good, but at leaſt) as profitable a thing. They have invented, and adorn'd a Spectacle, that for forty Days together has brought more Mony, to the Houſe, than the beſt Play that ever was writ. The Spectacle I mean, Sir, is that of the Coronation-Ceremony of *Anna Bullen*: And though we allow a good Play to be the more laudable Performance, yet, Sir, in the profitable Part of it, there is no Compariſon. If therefore, our Spectacle brought in as much, or more Mony, than Sir *Richard*'s Comedy, what is there, on his ſide but Uſage, that intitles him, to be paid for one, more, than we are, for t'other? But then, Sir, if he is ſo profitably diſtinguiſh'd for his Play, if we yield him up the Preference, and pay him, for his extraordinary Compoſition, and take nothing for our own, tho' it turn'd out more to our common Profit; ſure, Sir, while we do ſuch extraordinary Duty, as Menagers, and while he neglects his Share of that Duty, he cannot grudge us the moderate Demand we make for our ſeparate Labour?

To conclude, Sir, if by our conſtant Attendance, our Care, our Anxiety (not to mention the diſagreeable Conteſts, we ſometimes meet with, both within, and without Doors, in the Menagement of our Theatre) we have not only ſav'd the whole

from

from Ruin, which, if we had all follow'd Sir *Richard*'s Example, could not have been avoided; I ſay, Sir, if we have ſtill made it ſo valuable an Income to him, without his giving us the leaſt Aſſiſtance for ſeveral Years paſt; we hope, Sir, that the poor Labourers, that have done all this for Sir *Richard*, will not be thought unworthy of their Hire.

How far our Affairs, being ſet in this particular Light, might aſſiſt our Cauſe, may be of no great Importance to gueſs; but the Iſſue of it was this: That Sir *Richard* not having made any Objection, to what we had charg'd for Menagement, for three Years together; and as our Proceedings had been all tranſacted, in open Day, without any clandeſtine Intention of Fraud; we were allow'd the Sums, in diſpute, above-mention'd; and Sir *Richard* not being adviſ'd, to appeal to the Lord-Chancellor, both Parties paid their own Coſts, and thought it their mutual Intereſt, to let this be the laſt of their Law-ſuits.

And now, gentle Reader, I ask Pardon, for ſo long an Impoſition on your Patience: For though I may have no ill Opinion of this Matter myſelf; yet to you, I can very eaſily conceive it may have been tedious. You are therefore, at your own Liberty of charging the whole Impertinence of it, either to the Weakneſs of my Judgment, or the Strength of my Vanity; and I will ſo far join in your Cenſure, that I farther confeſs, I have been ſo impatient to give it you, that you have had it, out of its turn: For, ſome Years, before this Suit was commenc'd, there were other Facts, that ought to have had a Precedence in my Hiſtory: But that, I dare ſay, is an Overſight you will eaſily excuſe, provided you afterwards find them worth reading. However, as to that Point, I muſt take my chance, and ſhall therefore proceed to ſpeak of the Theatre, which was order'd by his late Majeſty to be erected in the Great old Hall at *Hampton-Court*; where Plays were intended to have been acted twice a Week, during the Summer-Seaſon. But before the Theatre could be finiſh'd, above half the Month of *September* being elaps'd, there were but

ſeven Plays acted before the Court return'd to *London.* This throwing open a Theatre, in a Royal Palace, ſeem'd to be reviving the Old *Engliſh* hoſpitable Grandeur, where the loweſt Rank of neighbouring Subjects might make themſelves merry at Court, without being laugh'd at themſelves. In former Reigns, Theatrical Entertainments at the Royal Palaces, had been perform'd at vaſt Expence, as appears by the Deſcription of the Decorations, in ſeveral of *Ben. Johnſon*'s Maſques, in King *James*, and *Charles the Firſt*'s time; many curious, and original Draughts of which, by Sir *Inigo Jones*, I have ſeen, in the *Muſæum* of our greateſt Maſter, and Patron of Arts, and Architecture, whom it would be a needleſs Liberty to name. But when our Civil Wars ended in the Decadence of Monarchy, it was then an Honour to the Stage, to have fallen with it: Yet, after the Reſtoration of *Charles* II. ſome faint Attempts were made to revive theſe Theatrical Spectacles at Court; but I have met with no Account of above one Maſque acted there, by the Nobility; which was that of *Caliſto*, written by *Crown*, the Author of Sir *Courtly Nice.* For what Reaſon *Crown* was choſen to that Honour, rather than *Dryden*, who was then Poet-Laureat, and out of all compariſon his Superior, in Poetry, may ſeem ſurprizing: But if we conſider the Offence which the then Duke of *Buckingham* took at the Character of *Zimri*, in *Dryden*'s *Abſalom*, &c. (which might probably be a Return, to his Grace's *Drawcanſir*, in the *Rehearſal*) we may ſuppoſe the Prejudice and Recommendation of ſo illuſtrious a Pretender to Poetry, might prevail, at Court, to give *Crown* this Preference. In the ſame Reign, the King had his Comedians at *Windſor*, but upon a particular Eſtabliſhment; for tho' they acted in St. *George*'s Hall, within the Royal Palace yet (as I have been inform'd by an Eye-witneſs) they were permitted to take Mony at the Door, of every Spectator; whether this was an Indulgence, in Conſcience, I cannot ſay; but it was a common Report among the principal Actors, when I firſt came into the *Theatre-Royal*, in

1690,

1690, that there was then, due to the Company, from that Court, about One Thouſand Five Hundred Pounds, for Plays commanded, *&c.* and yet it was the general Complaint, in that Prince's Reign, that he paid too much Ready-mony, for his Pleaſures: But theſe Aſſertions I only give, as I receiv'd them, without being anſwerable, for their Reality. This Theatrical Anecdote, however, puts me in mind of one of a more private nature, which I had from old ſolemn *Boman*, the late Actor of venerable Memory. *Boman*, then a Youth, and fam'd for his Voice, was appointed to ſing ſome Part, in a Concert of Muſick at the private Lodgings of Mrs. *Gwin*; at which were only preſent, the King, the Duke of *York*, and one, or two more, who were uſually admitted upon thoſe detached Parties of Pleaſure. When the Performance was ended, the King expreſs'd himſelf highly pleas'd, and gave it extraordinary Commendations: Then, Sir, ſaid the Lady, to ſhew you don't ſpeak like a Courtier, I hope you will make the Performers a handſom Preſent: The King ſaid, he had no Mony about him, and ask'd the Duke if he had any? To which the Duke reply'd, I believe, Sir, not above a Guinea, or two. Upon which the laughing Lady, turning to the People about her, and making bold with the King's common Expreſſion, cry'd, *Od's Fiſh! What Company am I got into!*

Whether the reverend Hiſtorian of his *Own Time*, among the many other Reaſons of the ſame Kind, he might have for ſtiling this Fair One the *indiſcreeteſt, and wildeſt Creature, that ever was in a Court*, might know This to be one of them, I can't ſay: But if we conſider her, in all the Diſadvantages of her Rank, and Education, ſhe does not appear to have had any criminal Errors more remarkable, than her Sex's Frailty to anſwer for: And, if the ſame Author, in his latter end of that Prince's Life, ſeems to reproach his Memory, with too kind a Concern for her Support, we may allow, that it becomes a Biſhop to have had no Eyes, or Taſte for the frivolous Charms or playful

ful *Badinage* of a King's Miſtreſs: Yet, if the common Fame of her may be believ'd, which in my Memory was not doubted, ſhe had leſs to be laid to her Charge, than any other of thoſe Ladies, who were in the ſame State of Preferment: She never meddled in Matters of ſerious Moment, or was the Tool of working Politicians: Never broke into thoſe amorous Infidelities, which others, in that grave Author are accus'd of; but was as viſibly diſtinguiſh'd, by her particular Perſonal Inclination to the King, as her Rivals were, by their Titles, and Grandeur. Give me leave to carry (perhaps, the Partiality of) my Obſervation a little farther. The ſame Author, in the ſame Page, 263, tells us, That, " Another of the King's Miſtreſſes, the Daughter of " a Clergyman, Mrs. *Roberts*, in whom her firſt Education had ſo " deep a Root, that tho' ſhe fell into many ſcandalous Diſorders, " with very diſmal Adventures in them all, yet a Principle of " Religion was ſo deep laid in her, that tho' it did not reſtrain " her, yet it kept alive in her, ſuch a conſtant Horror of Sin, that " ſhe was never eaſy, in an ill courſe, and died with a great " Senſe of her former ill Life.

To all this let us give an implicit Credit: Here is the Account of a frail Sinner made up, with a Reverend Witneſs! Yet I cannot but lament, that this Mitred Hiſtorian, who ſeems to know more Perſonal Secrets, than any that ever writ before him, ſhould not have been as inquiſitive after the laſt Hours of our other Fair Offender, whoſe Repentance I have been unqueſtionably inform'd, appear'd in all the contrite Symptoms of a Chriſtian Sincerity. If therefore you find I am ſo much concern'd to make this favourable mention of the one, becauſe ſhe was a Siſter of the *Theatre*, why may not --- But I dare not be ſo preſumptuous, ſo uncharitably bold, as to ſuppoſe the other was ſpoken better of, merely becauſe ſhe was the Daughter of a *Clergyman*. Well, and what then? What's all this idle Prate, you may ſay, to the matter in hand? Why, I ſay your Queſtion is a little too critical; and if you won't give an Author leave, now and then, to em-

embelliſh his Work, by a natural Reflexion, you are an ungentle Reader. But I have done with my Digreſſion, and return to our Theatre at *Hampton-Court*, where I am not ſure the Reader, be he ever ſo wiſe, will meet with any thing more worth his notice: However, if he happens to read, as I write, for want of ſomething better to do, he will go on; and perhaps, wonder when I tell him, that

A Play preſented at Court, or acted on a publick Stage, ſeem to their different Auditors, a different Entertainment. Now hear my Reaſon for it. In the common Theatre, the Gueſts are at home, where the politer Forms of Good-breeding are not ſo nicely regarded: Every one there, falls to, and likes or finds fault, according to his natural Taſte, or Appetite. At Court, where the Prince gives the Treat, and honours the Table with his own Preſence, the Audience is under the Reſtraint of a Circle, where Laughter, or Applauſe, rais'd higher than a Whiſper, would be ſtar'd at. At a publick Play they are both let looſe, even 'till the Actor is, ſometimes, pleas'd with his not being able to be heard, for the Clamour of them. But this Coldneſs or Decency of Attention, at Court, I obſerv'd had but a melancholy Effect, upon the impatient Vanity of ſome of our Actors, who ſeem'd inconſolable, when their flaſhy Endeavours to pleaſe had paſs'd unheeded: Their not conſidering where they were, quite diſconcerted them; nor could they recover their Spirits, 'till from the loweſt Rank of the Audience, ſome gaping *John*, or *Joan*, in the fullneſs of their Hearts, roar'd out their Approbation: And indeed, ſuch a natural Inſtance of honeſt Simplicity, a Prince himſelf, whoſe Indulgence knows where to make Allowances, might reaſonably ſmile at, and perhaps not think it the worſt part of his Entertainment. Yet it muſt be own'd, that an Audience may be as well too much reſerv'd, as too profuſe of their Applauſe: For though, it is poſſible a *Betterton* would not have been diſcourag'd, from throwing out an Excellence, or elated into an Error, by his Auditors being too little, or too much

pleas'd,

pleas'd, yet as Actors of his Judgment are Rarities; thoſe of leſs Judgment may ſink into a Flatneſs, in their Performance, for want of that Applauſe, which from the generality of Judges, they might perhaps, have ſome Pretence to: And the Auditor, when not ſeeming to feel what ought to affect him, may rob himſelf of ſomething more, that he might have had, by giving the Actor his Due, who meaſures out his Power to pleaſe, according to the Value he ſets upon his Hearer's Taſte, or Capacity. But however, as we were not, here, itinerant Adventurers, and had properly but one Royal Auditor to pleaſe; after that Honour was attain'd to, the reſt of our Ambition had little to look after: And that the King was often pleas'd, we were not only aſſur'd, by thoſe who had the Honour to be near him; but could ſee it, from the frequent Satisfaction in his Looks at particular Scenes, and Paſſages: One Inſtance of which I am tempted to relate, becauſe it was at a Speech, that might more naturally affect a Sovereign Prince, than any private Spectator. In *Shakeſpear*'s *Harry the Eighth*; that King commands the Cardinal to write circular Letters of Indemnity, into every County, where the Payment of certain heavy Taxes had been diſputed: Upon which the Cardinal whiſpers the following Directions to his Secretary *Cromwell:*

------- *A Word with you:*
Let there be Letters writ to every Shire,
Of the King's Grace, and Pardon: The griev'd Commons
Hardly conceive of me. Let it be nois'd,
That through our Interceſſion, *this Revokement,*
And Pardon comes. --- I ſhall anon adviſe you
Farther, in the Proceeding ------

The Solicitude of this Spiritual Miniſter, in filching from his Maſter the Grace, and Merit of a good Action, and dreſſing up himſelf in it, while himſelf had been Author of the Evil complain'd of, was ſo eaſy a Stroke of his Temporal Conſcience, that

that it ſeem'd to raiſe the King into ſomething more than a Smile, whenever that Play came before him: And I had a more diſtinct Occaſion, to obſerve this Effect; becauſe my proper Stand on the Stage, when I ſpoke the Lines, required me to be near the Box, where the King uſually ſate. In a Word, this Play is ſo true a Dramatick Chronicle of an old *Engliſh* Court, and where the Character of *Harry the Eighth* is ſo exactly drawn, even to a humorous Likeneſs, that it may be no wonder why his Majeſty's particular Taſte for it, ſhould have commanded it three ſeveral times in one Winter.

This too calls to my Memory an extravagant Pleaſantry of Sir *Richard Steele*, who being ask'd by a grave Nobleman, after the ſame Play had been preſented at *Hampton-Court*, how the King lik'd it; reply'd, *So terribly well, my Lord, that I was afraid I ſhould have loſt all my Actors! For I was not ſure, the King would not keep them to fill the Poſts at Court, that he ſaw them ſo fit for in the Play.*

It may be imagin'd, that giving Plays to the People at ſuch a diſtance from *London*, could not but be attended with an extraordinary Expence; and it was ſome Difficulty, when they were firſt talk'd of, to bring them under a moderate Sum; I ſhall therefore, in as few Words, as poſſible, give a Particular of what Eſtabliſhment they were then brought to, that in caſe the ſame Entertainments, ſhould at any time hereafter be call'd to the ſame Place, future Courts may judge, how far the Precedent may ſtand good, or need an Alteration.

Though the ſtated Fee, for a Play acted, at *Whitehall* had been formerly, but Twenty Pounds; yet, as that hinder'd not the Company's acting on the ſame Day, at the Publick Theatre, that Sum was almoſt all clear Profits to them: But this Circumſtance not being practicable, when they were commanded to *Hampton-Court*, a new, and extraordinary Charge was unavoidable: The Menagers, therefore, not to inflame it, deſired no

Conſideration, for their own Labour, farther than the Honour of being employ'd, in his Majeſty's Commands; and, if the other Actors might be allow'd, each their Days Pay, and travelling Charges, they ſhould hold themſelves ready, to act any Play, there, at a Day's Warning: And that the Trouble might be leſs, by being divided, the Lord-Chamberlain was pleas'd to let us know, that the Houſhold-Muſick, the Wax Lights, and a *Chaiſe-Marine*, to carry our moving Wardrobe to every different Play, ſhould be under the Charge of the proper Officers. Notwithſtanding theſe Aſſiſtances, the Expence of every Play amounted to Fifty Pounds: Which Account, when all was over, was not only allow'd us, but his Majeſty was graciouſly pleas'd to give the Menagers Two Hundred Pounds more, for their particular Performance, and Trouble, in only ſeven times acting. Which laſt Sum, tho' it might not be too much, for a Sovereign Prince to give, it was certainly more than our utmoſt Merit ought to have hop'd for: And I confeſs, when I receiv'd the Order for the Mony, from his Grace the Duke of *Newcaſtle*, then Lord-Chamberlain, I was ſo ſurpris'd, that I imagin'd his Grace's Favour, or Recommendation of our Readineſs, or Diligence, muſt have contributed to ſo high a Conſideration of it, and was offering my Acknowledgments, as I thought them due; but was ſoon ſtopt ſhort, by his Grace's Declaration, That we had no Obligations for it, but to the King himſelf, who had given it, from no other Motive, than his own Bounty. Now whether we may ſuppoſe that Cardinal *Wolſey* (as you ſee *Shakeſpear* has drawn him) would ſilently have taken ſuch low Acknowledgments to himſelf, perhaps may be as little worth conſideration, as my mentioning this Circumſtance has been neceſſary: But if it is due to the Honour and Integrity of the (then) Lord-Chamberlain, I cannot think it wholly impertinent.

Since that time, there has been but one Play given at *Hampton-Court*, which was for the Entertainment of the Duke of *Lorrain*;

rain; and for which his preſent Majeſty was pleas'd to order us a Hundred Pounds.

The Reader may, now, plainly ſee, that I am ranſacking my Memory, for ſuch remaining Scraps of Theatrical Hiſtory, as may not, perhaps, be worth his Notice: But if they are ſuch as tempt me to write them, why may I not hope, that in this wide World, there may be many an idle Soul, no wiſer than myſelf, who may be equally tempted to read them?

I have ſo often had occaſion to compare the State of the Stage to the State of a Nation, that I yet feel a Reluctancy to drop the Compariſon, or ſpeak of the one, without ſome Application to the other. How many Reigns, then, do I remember, from that of *Charles* the Second, through all which, there has been, from one half of the People, or the other, a Succeſſion of Clamour, againſt every different Miniſtry for the Time being? And yet, let the Cauſe of this Clamour have been never ſo well grounded, it is impoſſible, but that ſome of thoſe Miniſters muſt have been wiſer, and honeſter Men, than others: If this be true, as true, I believe it is, why may I not then ſay, as ſome Fool in a *French* Play does, upon a like Occaſion--- *Juſtement, comme chez nous!* 'Twas exactly the ſame with our Menagement! let us have done never ſo well, we could not pleaſe every body: All I can ſay, in our Defence, is, that though many good Judges, might poſſibly conceive how the State of the Stage might have been mended, yet the beſt of them never pretended to remember the Time when it was better! or could ſhew us the way to make their imaginary Amendments practicable.

For though I have often allow'd, that our beſt Merit, as Actors, was never equal to that of our Predeceſſors, yet I will venture to ſay, that in all its Branches, the Stage had never been under ſo juſt, ſo proſperous, and ſo ſettled a Regulation, for forty Years before, as it was at the Time I am ſpeaking of. The moſt plauſible Objection to our Adminiſtration, ſeem'd to be, that we

took no Care to breed up young Actors, to ſucceed us; and this was imputed as the greater Fault, becauſe it was taken for granted, that it was a Matter as eaſy as planting ſo many Cabbages: Now might not a Court be as well reproach'd, for not breeding up a Succeſſion of complete Miniſters? And yet it is evident, that if Providence, or Nature don't ſupply us with both, the State, and the Stage will be but poorly ſupported. If a Man of an ample Fortune, ſhould take it into his Head, to give a younger Son an extraordinary Allowance, in order to breed him a great Poet, what might we ſuppoſe would be the Odds, that his Trouble, and Mony would be all thrown away? Not more, than it would be, againſt the Maſter of a Theatre, who ſhould ſay, this, or that young Man, I will take care ſhall be an excellent Actor! Let it be our Excuſe then, for that miſtaken Charge againſt us; that ſince there was no Garden, or Market, where accompliſh'd Actors grew, or were to be ſold, we could only pick them up, as we do Pebbles of Value, by Chance: We may poliſh a thouſand, before we find one, fit to make a Figure, in the Lid of a Snuff-Box. And how few ſoever we were able to produce, it is no Proof, that we were not always in ſearch of them: Yet, at worſt, it was allow'd, that our Deficiency of Men Actors, was not ſo viſible, as our Scarcity of tollerable Women: But when it is conſider'd, that the Life of Youth and Beauty is too ſhort for the bringing an Actreſs to her Perfection; were I to mention too, the many frail fair Ones, I remember, who, before they could arrive to their Theatrical Maturity, were felonioufly ſtoln from the Tree, it would rather be thought our Misfortune, than our Fault, that we were not better provided.

Even the Laws of a Nunnery, we find, are thought no ſufficient Security againſt Temptations, without iron Grates, and high Walls to inforce them; which the Architecture of a Theatre will not ſo properly admit of: And yet, methinks,

Beauty

Beauty that has not thoſe artificial Fortreſſes about it, that has no Defence but its natural Virtue (which upon the Stage has more than once been met with) makes a much more meritorious Figure, in Life, than that immur'd Virtue, which could never be try'd. But alas! as the poor Stage, is but the Show-glaſs to a Toy-ſhop, we muſt not wonder, if now and then, ſome of the Bawbles ſhould find a Purchaſer.

However, as to ſay more, or leſs than Truth, are equally unfaithful in an Hiſtorian; I cannot but own, that in the Government of the Theatre, I have known many Inſtances, where the Merit of promiſing Actors has not always been brought forward, with the Regard, or Favour, it had a Claim to: And if I put my Reader in mind, that in the early Part of this Work, I have ſhewn, through what continued Difficulties, and Diſcouragements I myſelf made my way up the Hill of Preferment; he may juſtly call it, too ſtrong a Glare of my Vanity: I am afraid he is in the right; but I pretend not to be one of thoſe chaſte Authors, that know how to write without it: When Truth is to be told it may be as much Chance, as Choice, if it happens to turn out in my favour: But to ſhew that this was true of others, as well as myſelf, *Booth* ſhall be another Inſtance. In 1707, when *Swiney* was the only Maſter of the Company in the *Hay-Market*; *Wilks*, though he was, then, but an hired Actor himſelf, rather choſe to govern, and give Orders, than to receive them; and was ſo jealous of *Booth*'s riſing, that, with a high Hand, he gave the Part of *Pierre*, in *Venice Preſerv'd*, to *Mills* the elder, who (not to undervalue him) was out of Sight, in the Pretenſions that *Booth*, then young, as he was, had to the ſame Part: And this very Diſcouragement ſo ſtrongly affected him, that not long after, when ſeveral of us became Sharers with *Swiney*, *Booth* rather choſe to riſque his Fortune, with the old Patentee in *Drury-Lane*, than come into our Intereſt, where he ſaw he was like to meet with more of thoſe Partialities. And yet again, *Booth* himſelf,

ſelf, when he came to be a Menager, would ſometimes ſuffer his Judgment to be blinded by his Inclination to Actors, whom the Town ſeem'd to have but an indifferent Opinion of. This again, inclines me to ask another of my odd Queſtions, *viz.* Have we never ſeen the ſame Paſſions govern a Court! How many white Staffs, and great Places do we find, in our Hiſtories, have been laid at the Feet of a Monarch, becauſe they choſe not to give way to a Rival, in Power, or hold a ſecond Place in his Favour? How many *Whigs*, and *Tories* have chang'd their Parties, when their good or bad Pretenſions have met with a Check to their higher Preferment?

Thus, we ſee, let the Degrees, and Rank of Men, be ever ſo unequal, Nature throws out their Paſſions, from the ſame Motives; 'tis not the Eminence, or Lowlineſs of either, that makes the one, when provok'd, more or leſs a reaſonable Creature than the other: The Courtier, and the Comedian, when their Ambition is out of Humour, take juſt the ſame Meaſures to right themſelves.

If this familiar Stile of talking ſhould, in the Noſtrils of Gravity, and Wiſdom, ſmell a little too much of the Preſumptuous, or the Pragmatical, I will, at leaſt, deſcend lower, in my Apology for it, by calling to my Aſſiſtance the old, humble Proverb, *viz. 'Tis an ill Bird that, &c.* Why then ſhould I debaſe my Profeſſion, by ſetting it in vulgar Lights, when I may ſhew it to more favourable Advantages? And when I ſpeak of our Errors, why may I not extenuate them by illuſtrious Examples? or by not allowing them greater, than the greateſt Men have been ſubject to? Or why, indeed, may I not ſuppoſe, that a ſenſible Reader will rather laugh, than look grave, at the Pomp of my Parallels?

Now, as I am tied down to the Veracity of an Hiſtorian, whoſe Facts cannot be ſuppoſed, like thoſe in a Romance, to be in the Choice of the Author, to make them more marvellous,

by

by Invention, if I ſhould happen to ſink into a little farther Inſignificancy, let the ſimple Truth of what I have farther to ſay, be my Excuſe for it. I am oblig'd, therefore, to make the Experiment, by ſhewing you the Conduct of our Theatrical Miniſtry in ſuch Lights, as on various Occaſions it appear'd in.

Though *Wilks* had more Induſtry, and Application, than any Actor I had ever known, yet we found it poſſible that thoſe neceſſary Qualities might ſometimes be ſo miſconducted, as not only to make them uſeleſs, but hurtful to our Common-wealth; for while he was impatient to be foremoſt, in every thing, he frequently ſhock'd the honeſt Ambition of others, whoſe Meaſures might have been more ſerviceable, could his Jealouſy have given way to them. His own Regards for himſelf, therefore, were, to avoid a diſagreeable Diſpute with him, too often comply'd with: But this leaving his Diligence, to his own Conduct, made us, in ſome Inſtances, pay dearly for it: For Example; he would take as much, or more Pains in forwarding to the Stage, the Water-gruel Work of ſome inſipid Author, that happen'd rightly to make his Court to him, than he would for the beſt Play, wherein it was not his Fortune to be choſen for the beſt Character. So great was his Impatience to be employ'd, that I ſcarce remember, in twenty Years, above one profitable Play, we could get to be reviv'd, wherein he found he was to make no conſiderable Figure, independent of him: But the *Tempeſt* having done Wonders formerly, he could not form any Pretenſions, to let it lie longer dormant: However, his Coldneſs to it was ſo viſible, that he took all Occaſions to poſtpone, and diſcourage its Progreſs, by frequently taking up the morning Stage with ſomething more to his Mind. Having been myſelf particularly ſollicitous for the reviving this Play, *Dogget* (for this was before *Booth* came into the Menagement) conſented that the extraordinary Decorations, and Habits, ſhould be left to my Care, and Direction, as the fitteſt Perſon, whoſe Temper could joſtle

through

through the petulant Oppoſition, that he knew *Wilks* would be always offering to it, becauſe he had but a middling Part in it, that of *Ferdinand:* Notwithſtanding which, ſo it happen'd, that the Succeſs of it ſhew'd (not to take from the Merit of *Wilks)* that it was poſſible to have good Audiences, without his extraordinary Aſſiſtance. In the firſt ſix Days of acting it, we paid all our conſtant, and incidental Expence, and ſhar'd each of us a hundred Pounds: The greateſt Profit, that in ſo little a Time had yet been known within my Memory! But, alas! what was paltry Pelf, to Glory? That was the darling Paſſion of *Wilks*'s Heart! and not to advance in it, was, to ſo jealous an Ambition, a painful Retreat, a meer Shade to his Laurels! and the common Benefit was but a poor Equivalent, to his want of particular Applauſe! To conclude, not Prince *Lewis* of *Baden*, though a Confederate General, with the Duke of *Malborough*, was more inconſolable, upon the memorable Victory at *Blenheim*, at which he was not preſent, than our Theatrical Hero was, to ſee any Action proſperous, that he was not himſelf at the Head of. If this then was an Infirmity in *Wilks*, why may not my ſhewing the ſame Weakneſs in ſo great a Man, mollify the Imputation, and keep his Memory in Countenance?

This laudable Appetite for Fame, in *Wilks*, was not, however to be fed, without that conſtant Labour, which only himſelf was able to come up to: He therefore bethought him of the means, to leſſen the Fatigue, and at the ſame time, to heighten his Reputation; which was by giving up now, and then, a Part to ſome raw Actor, who he was ſure would diſgrace it, and conſequently put the Audience in mind of his ſuperior Performance: Among this ſort of Indulgences to young Actors, he happen'd once to make a Miſtake, that ſet his Views in a clear Light. The beſt Criticks, I believe, will allow, that in *Shakeſpear*'s *Macbeth*, there are in the Part of *Macduff* two Scenes, the one of Terror, in the ſecond Act; and the other of Compaſſion, in the fourth,

equal

equal to any that dramatick Poetry has produc'd: Theſe Scenes *Wilks* had acted with Succeſs, tho' far ſhort of that happier Skill and Grace, which *Monfort* had formerly ſhewn, in them. Such a Part, however, one might imagine would be one of the laſt, a good Actor would chuſe to part with: But *Wilks* was of a different Opinion; for *Macbeth* was thrice as long, had more great Scenes of Action, and bore the Name of the Play: Now, to be a ſecond in any Play, was what he did not much care for, and had been ſeldom us'd to: This Part of *Macduff*, therefore, he had given to one *Williams*, as yet no extraordinary, though a promiſing Actor. *Williams*, in the Simplicity of his Heart, immediately told *Booth*, what a Favour *Wilks* had done him. *Booth*, as he had Reaſon, thought *Wilks* had here carried his Indulgence, and his Authority, a little too far; for as *Booth* had no better a Part, in the ſame Play, than that of *Banquo*, he found himſelf too much diſregarded, in letting ſo young an Actor take Place of him: *Booth*, therefore, who knew the Value of *Macduff*, propoſed to do it himſelf, and to give *Banquo* to *Williams*; and to make him farther amends, offer'd him any other of his Parts, that he thought might be of Service to him. *Williams* was content with the Exchange, and thankful for the Promiſe. This Scheme, indeed, (had it taken Effect) might have been an Eaſe to *Wilks*, and poſſibly no Diſadvantage to the Play; but ſoftly--- That was not quite what we had a Mind to! No ſooner then, came this Propoſal to *Wilks*, but off went the Maſque, and out came the Secret! For though *Wilks* wanted to be eas'd of the Part, he did not deſire to be *excell'd* in it; and as he was not ſure but that might be the caſe, if *Booth* were to act it, he wiſely retracted his own Project, took *Macduff* again to himſelf, and while he liv'd, never had a Thought of running the ſame Hazard, by any farther Offer to reſign it.

Here, I confeſs, I am at a Loſs for a Fact in Hiſtory, to which this can be a Parallel! To be weary of a Poſt, even to

a real Deſire of reſigning it; and yet to chuſe, rather to drudge on in it, than ſuffer it to be well ſupplied (though to ſhare in that Advantage) is a Delicacy of Ambition, that *Machiavil* himſelf has made no mention of: Or if in old *Rome*, the Jealouſy of any pretended Patriot, equally inclin'd to abdicate his Office, may have come up to it; 'tis more than my reading remembers.

As nothing can be more impertinent, than ſhewing too frequent a Fear, to be thought ſo, I will, without farther Apology, rather riſque that Imputation, than not tell you another Story much to the ſame purpoſe, and of no more conſequence than my laſt. To make you underſtand it however, a little Preface will be neceſſary.

If the Merit of an Actor (as it certainly does) conſiſts more in the Quality, than the Quantity of his Labour; the other Menagers had no viſible Reaſon to think, this needleſs Ambition of *Wilks*, in being ſo often, and ſometimes ſo unneceſſarily employ'd, gave him any Title to a Superiority; eſpecially when our Articles of Agreement, had allow'd us all to be equal. But what are narrow Contracts to great Souls with growing Deſires. *Wilks* therefore, who thought himſelf leſſen'd, in appealing to any Judgment, but his own, plainly diſcovered, by his reſtleſs Behaviour (though he did not care to ſpeak out) that he thought he had a Right to ſome higher Conſideration, for his Performance: This was often *Booth*'s Opinion, as well as my own. It muſt be farther obſerv'd, that he actually had a ſeparate Allowance of Fifty Pounds a Year, for writing our daily Play-Bills, for the Printer: Which Province, to ſay the Truth, was the only one we car'd to truſt to his particular Intendance, or could find out for a Pretence to diſtinguiſh him. But, to ſpeak a plainer Truth, this Penſion, which was no part of our original Agreement, was merely paid to keep him quiet, and not that we thought it due to ſo inſignificant a Charge, as what a Prompter had formerly executed.

executed. This being really the Caſe, his frequent Complaints of being a Drudge to the Company, grew ſomething more, than diſagreeable to us: For we could not digeſt the Impoſition of a Man's ſetting himſelf to work, and then bringing in his own Bill for it. *Booth*, therefore, who was leſs eaſy, than I was, to ſee him ſo often ſetting a Merit upon this Quantity of his Labour, which neither could be our Intereſt, or his own, to lay upon him; propoſed to me, that we might remove this pretended Grievance, by reviving ſome Play, that might be likely to live, and be eaſily acted, without *Wilks*'s having any Part in it. About this time, an unexpected Occaſion offer'd itſelf, to put our Project, in practice: What follow'd our Attempt, will be all (if any thing be) worth Obſervation, in my Story.

In 1725, we were call'd upon, in a manner, that could not be reſiſted, to revive the *Provok'd Wife*, a Comedy, which, while we found our Account, in keeping the Stage clear of thoſe looſe Liberties, it had formerly, too juſtly been charg'd with; we had laid aſide, for ſome Years. The Author, Sir *John Vanbrugh*, who was conſcious of what it had too much of, was prevail'd upon, to ſubſtitute a new-written Scene in the Place of one, in the fourth Act, where the Wantonneſs of his Wit, and Humour, had (originally) made a Rake talk like a Rake, in the borrow'd Habit of a Clergyman: To avoid which Offence, he clapt the ſame Debauchee, into the Undreſs of a Woman of Quality: Now the Character, and Profeſſion of a Fine Lady, not being ſo indelibly ſacred as that of a Churchman; whatever Follies he expos'd, in the Petticoat, kept him, at leaſt clear of his former Prophaneneſs, and were now innocently ridiculous, to the Spectator.

This Play being thus refitted for the Stage, was, as I have obſerved, call'd for, from Court, and by many of the Nobility. Now, then, we thought was a proper time to come to an Explanation with *Wilks*: Accordingly, when the Actors were ſum-

mon'd to hear the Play read, and receive their Parts; I addreſs'd myſelf to *Wilks*, before them all, and told him, That as the Part of *Conſtant*, which he ſeem'd to chuſe, was a Character of leſs Action, than he generally appear'd in, we thought this might be a good Occaſion to eaſe himſelf, by giving it to another. --- Here he look'd grave. --- That the Love-Scenes of it were rather ſerious, than gay, or humourous, and therefore might ſit very well upon *Booth*. --- Down dropt his Brow, and furl'd were his Features. --- That if we were never to revive a tolerable Play, without him, what would become of us, in caſe of his Indiſpoſition? --- Here he pretended to ſtir the Fire. --- That as he could have no farther Advantage, or Advancement, in his Station to hope for, his acting in this Play was but giving himſelf an unprofitable trouble, which neither *Booth*, or I, deſired to impoſe upon him. --- Softly. --- Now the Pill began to gripe him. --- In a Word, this provoking Civility, plung'd him into a Paſſion, which he was no longer able to contain; out it came, with all the Equipage of unlimited Language, that on ſuch Occaſions his Diſpleaſure uſually ſet out with; but when his Reply was ſtript of thoſe Ornaments, it was plainly this: That he look'd upon all I had ſaid, as a concerted Deſign, not only to ſignalize our ſelves, by laying him aſide; but a Contrivance to draw him into the Diſfavour of the Nobility, by making it ſuppos'd his own Choice, that he did not act in a Play ſo particularly ask'd for; but we ſhould find, he could ſtand upon his own Bottom, and it was not all our little caballing ſhould get our Ends of him: To which I anſwer'd with ſome Warmth, That he was miſtaken in our Ends; for Thoſe, Sir, ſaid I, you have anſwer'd already, by ſhewing the Company, you cannot bear to be left out of any Play. Are not you every Day complaining of your being overlabour'd? And now, upon our firſt offering to eaſe you, you fly into a Paſſion, and pretend to make that a greater Grievance, than t'other: But, Sir, if your being In, or Out of the Play, is

a Hard-

a Hardſhip, you ſhall impoſe it upon yourſelf: The Part is in your Hand, and to us, it is a Matter of Indifference now, whether you take it, or leave it. Upon this he threw down the Part upon the Table, croſs'd his Arms, and ſate knocking his Heel, upon the Floor, as ſeeming to threaten moſt, when he ſaid leaſt; but when no body perſuaded him to take it up again, *Booth*, not chuſing to puſh the matter too far, but rather to ſplit the difference of our Diſpute, ſaid, That for his Part, he ſaw no ſuch great matter in acting every Day; for he believed it the wholſomeſt Exerciſe in the World; it kept the Spirits in motion, and always gave him a good Stomach. Tho' this was, in a manner, giving up the Part to *Wilks*, yet it did not allow, he did us any Favour in receiving it. Here, I obſerv'd Mrs. *Oldfield* began to titter, behind her Fan: But *Wilks* being more intent, upon what *Booth* had ſaid, reply'd, Every one could beſt feel for himſelf, but he did not pretend to the Strength of a Pack-horſe; therefore if Mrs. *Oldfield* would chuſe any body elſe to play with her, he ſhould be very glad to be excus'd: This throwing the Negative upon Mrs. *Oldfield*, was, indeed, a ſure way to ſave himſelf; which I could not help taking notice of, by ſaying, It was making but an ill Compliment, to the Company, to ſuppoſe, there was but one Man in it, fit to play an ordinary Part with her. Here Mrs. *Oldfield* got up, and turning me half round to come forward, ſaid with her uſual Frankneſs, Pooh! you are all a Parcel of Fools, to make ſuch a rout about nothing! Rightly judging, that the Perſon, moſt out of humour, would not be more diſpleas'd at her calling us all, by the ſame Name. As ſhe knew, too, the beſt way of ending the Debate, would be to help the Weak; ſhe ſaid, ſhe hop'd Mr. *Wilks* would not ſo far mind what had paſt, as to refuſe his acting the Part, with her; for though it might not be ſo good, as he had been us'd to; yet, ſhe believed, thoſe who had beſpoke the Play, would expect to have it done to the beſt Advantage, and it would make but an odd

odd Story abroad, if it were known, there had been any Difficulty in that point among ourſelves. To conclude, *Wilks* had the Part, and we had all we wanted; which was an Occaſion to let him ſee, that the Accident, or Choice of one Menager's being more employ'd than another, would never be allow'd a Pretence, for altering our Indentures, or his having an extraordinary Conſideration for it.

However diſagreeable it might be, to have this unſociable Temper daily to deal with; yet I cannot but ſay, that from the ſame impatient Spirit, that had ſo often hurt us, we ſtill drew valuable Advantages: For as *Wilks* ſeem'd to have no Joy, in Life, beyond his being diſtinguiſh'd on the Stage; we were not only ſure of his always doing his beſt, there, himſelf; but of making others more careful, than without the Rod of ſo iraſcible a Temper over them, they would have been. And I much queſtion, if a more temperate, or better Uſage of the hired Actors, could have ſo effectually kept them to Order. Not even *Betterton* (as we have ſeen) with all his good Senſe, his great Fame, and Experience, could, by being only a quiet Example of Induſtry himſelf, ſave his Company from falling, while neither Gentleneſs could govern, or the Conſideration of their common Intereſt reform them. Diligence, with much the inferior Skill, or Capacity, will beat the beſt negligent Company, that ever came upon a Stage. But when a certain dreaming Idleneſs, or jolly Negligence of Rehearſals gets into a Body of the Ignorant, and Incapable (which before *Wilks* came into *Drury-Lane*, when *Powell* was at the Head of them, was the Caſe of that Company) then, I ſay, a ſenſible Spectator might have look'd upon the fallen Stage, as *Portius* in the Play of *Cato*, does upon his ruin'd Country, and have lamented it, in (ſomething near) the ſame Exclamation, *viz.*

--- O ye

----- O ye Immortal Bards!
What Havock do theſe Blockheads make among your Works!
How are the boaſted Labours of an Age,
Defac'd, and tortur'd, by Ungracious Action?

Of this wicked Doings, *Dryden* too complains in one of his Prologues, at that time, where ſpeaking of ſuch lewd Actors, he cloſes a Couplet with the following Line, *viz.*

And murder Plays, which they miſcall Reviving.

The great Share, therefore, that *Wilks*, by his exemplary Diligence, and Impatience of Neglect, in others, had in the Reformation of this Evil, ought in Juſtice to be remember'd; and let my own Vanity here take Shame, to itſelf, when I confeſs, That had I had half his Application, I ſtill think I might have ſhewn myſelf twice the Actor, that in my higheſt State of Favour, I appear'd to be. But, if I have any Excuſe for that Neglect (a Fault, which if I loved not Truth, I need not have mentioned) it is that ſo much of my Attention was taken up in an inceſſant Labour to guard againſt our private Animoſities, and preſerve a Harmony, in our Menagement, that I hope, and believe, it made ample Amends, for whatever Omiſſion, my Auditors might ſometimes know it coſt me ſome pains to conceal. But Nature takes care to beſtow her Bleſſings, with a more equal Hand than Fortune does, and is ſeldom known to heap too many upon one Man: One tolerable Talent, in an Individual, is enough to preſerve him, from being good for nothing; and, if that was not laid to my Charge, as an Actor, I have in this Light too, leſs to complain of, than to be thankful for.

Before I conclude my Hiſtory, it may be expected, I ſhould give ſome further View of theſe my laſt Cotemporaries of the Theatre,

Theatre, *Wilks*, and *Booth*, in their different acting Capacities. If I were to paint them in the Colours they laid upon one another, their Talents would not be ſhewn with half the Commendation, I am inclin'd to beſtow upon them, when they are left to my own Opinion. But People of the ſame Profeſſion, are apt to ſee themſelves, in their own clear Glaſs of Partiality, and look upon their Equals through a Miſt of Prejudice. It might be imagin'd too, from the difference of their natural Tempers, that *Wilks* ſhould have been more blind, to the Excellencies of *Booth*, than *Booth* was to thoſe of *Wilks*; but it was not ſo: *Wilks* would ſometimes commend *Booth* to me; but when *Wilks* excell'd, the other was ſilent: *Booth* ſeem'd to think nothing valuable, that was not tragically Great, or Marvellous: Let that be as true, as it may; yet I have often thought, that from his having no Taſte of Humour himſelf, he might be too much inclin'd to depreciate the Acting of it in others. The very ſlight Opinion, which in private Converſation with me, he had of *Wilks*'s acting Sir *Harry Wildair*, was certainly more, than could be juſtified; not only from the general Applauſe that was againſt that Opinion (though Applauſe is not always infallible) but from the viſible Capacity which muſt be allow'd to an Actor, that could carry ſuch ſlight Materials to ſuch a height of Approbation: For though the Character of *Wildair*, ſcarce in any one Scene, will ſtand againſt a juſt Criticiſm; yet in the Whole, there are ſo many gay, and falſe Colours of the fine Gentleman, that nothing but a Vivacity in the Performance, proportionably extravagant, could have made them ſo happily glare, upon a common Audience.

Wilks, from his firſt ſetting out, certainly form'd his manner of Acting, upon the Model of *Monfort*; as *Booth* did his, on that of *Betterton*. But --- *Haud paſſibus æquis*: I cannot ſay, either of them came up to their Original. *Wilks* had not that eaſy regulated Behaviour, or the harmonious Elocution of the One,

One, nor *Booth* that conſcious Aſpect of Intelligence, nor requiſite Variation of Voice, that made every Line the Other ſpoke ſeem his own, natural, ſelf-deliver'd Sentiment: Yet there is ſtill room for great Commendation of Both the firſt mentioned; which will not be ſo much diminiſh'd, in my having ſaid, they were only excell'd by ſuch Predeceſſors, as it will be rais'd, in venturing to affirm, it will be a longer time, before any Succeſſors will come near them. Thus one of the greateſt Praiſes given to *Virgil* is, That no Succeſſor in Poetry came ſo near *Him*, as *He* himſelf did to *Homer*.

Tho' the Majority of Publick Auditors are but bad Judges of Theatrical Action, and are often deceiv'd into their Approbation of what has no ſolid Pretence to it; yet, as there are no other appointed Judges to appeal to, and as every ſingle Spectator has a Right to be one of them, their Sentence will be definitive, and the Merit of an Actor muſt, in ſome degree, be weigh'd by it: By this Law then, *Wilks* was pronounc'd an Excellent Actor; which if the few true Judges did not allow him to be, they were at leaſt too candid to ſlight, or diſcourage him. *Booth* and he were Actors ſo directly oppoſite in their Manner, that, if either of them could have borrow'd a little of the other's Fault, they would Both have been improv'd by it: If *Wilks* had ſometimes too violent a Vivacity; *Booth* as often contented himſelf with too grave a Dignity: The Latter ſeem'd too much to heave up his Words, as the Other to dart them to the Ear, with too quick, and ſharp a Vehemence: Thus *Wilks* would too frequently break into the Time, and Meaſure of the Harmony, by too many ſpirited Accents, in one Line; and *Booth*, by too ſolemn a Regard to Harmony, would as often loſe the neceſſary Spirit of it: So that (as I have obſerv'd) could we have ſometimes rais'd the one, and ſunk the other, they had both been nearer to the Mark. Yet this could not be always objected to them: They had their Intervals of unexceptionable Excellence,

that more, than balanc'd their Errors. The Maſter-piece of *Booth* was *Othello:* There, he was moſt in Character, and ſeem'd not more to animate, or pleaſe himſelf, in it, than his Spectators. 'Tis true he ow'd his laſt, and higheſt Advancement, to his acting *Cato:* But it was the Novelty, and critical Appearance of that Character, that chiefly ſwell'd the Torrent of his Applauſe: For let the Sentiments of a declaiming Patriot have all the Sublimity, that Poetry can raiſe them to; let them be deliver'd too, with the utmoſt Grace, and Dignity of Elocution, that can recommend them to the Auditor: Yet this is but one Light, wherein the Excellence of an Actor can ſhine: But in *Othello* we may ſee him, in the Variety of Nature: There the Actor is carried through the different Accidents of domeſtick, Happineſs, and Miſery, occaſionally torn, and tortur'd by the moſt diſtracting Paſſion, that can raiſe Terror, or Compaſſion, in the Spectator. Such are the Characters, that a Maſter Actor would delight in; and therefore in *Othello*, I may ſafely aver, that *Booth* ſhew'd himſelf thrice the Actor, that he could in *Cato*: And yet his Merit in acting *Cato* need not be diminiſh'd by this Compariſon.

Wilks often regretted, that in Tragedy, he had not the full, and ſtrong Voice of *Booth* to command, and grace his Periods with: But *Booth* us'd to ſay, That if his Ear had been equal to it, *Wilks* had Voice enough to have ſhewn himſelf a much better Tragedian. Now though there might be ſome Truth in this; yet theſe two Actors were of ſo mixt a Merit, that even, in Tragedy, the Superiority was not always on the ſame ſide: In Sorrow, Tenderneſs, or Reſignation, *Wilks* plainly had the Advantage, and ſeem'd more pathetically to feel, look, and expreſs his Calamity: But, in the more turbulent Tranſports of the Heart, *Booth* again bore the Palm, and left all Competitors behind him. A Fact perhaps will ſet this Difference, in a clearer Light. I have formerly ſeen *Wilks* act *Othello*, and

Booth

Booth the *Earl of Eſſex*, in which they both miſcarried: Neither the exclamatory Rage, or Jealouſy of the one, or the plaintive Diſtreſſes of the other, were happily executed, or became either of them; tho' in the contrary Characters, they were both excellent.

When an Actor Becomes, and naturally Looks the Character he ſtands in, I have often obſerv'd it to have had as fortunate an Effect, and as much recommended him to the Approbation of the common Auditors, as the moſt correct, or judicious Utterance of the Sentiments: This was ſtrongly viſible, in the favourable Reception *Wilks* met with in *Hamlet*, where I own the Half of what he ſpoke, was as painful to my Ear, as every Line, that came from *Betterton* was charming; And yet it is not impoſſible, could they have come to a Poll, but *Wilks* might have had a Majority of Admirers: However, ſuch a Diviſion had been no Proof, that the Præeminence had not ſtill remain'd in *Betterton*; and if I ſhould add, that *Booth* too, was behind *Betterton* in *Othello*, it would be ſaying no more, than *Booth* himſelf had Judgment, and Candour enough to know, and confeſs. And if both he, and *Wilks*, are allow'd, in the two above-mention'd Characters, a ſecond Place, to ſo great a Maſter, as *Betterton*, it will be a Rank of Praiſe, that the beſt Actors, ſince my Time, might have been proud of.

I am now come towards the End of that Time, through which our Affairs had long gone forward in a ſettled courſe of Proſperity. From the viſible Errors of former Menagements, we had, at laſt, found the neceſſary Means to bring our private Laws, and Orders, into the general Obſervance, and Approbation of our Society: Diligence, and Neglect, were under an equal Eye; the one never fail'd of its Reward, and the other, by being very rarely excus'd, was leſs frequently committed. You are now to conſider us in our height of Favour, and ſo

much in faſhion, with the Politer part of the Town, that our Houſe, every *Saturday*, ſeem'd to be the appointed Aſſembly of the Firſt Ladies of Quality: Of this too, the common Spectators were ſo well apprized, that for twenty Years ſucceſſively, on that Day, we ſcarce ever fail'd of a crowded Audience; for which Occaſion we particularly reſerv'd our beſt Plays, acted in the beſt manner we could give them.

Among our many neceſſary Reformations; what not a little preſerv'd to us the Regard of our Auditors, was the Decency of our clear Stage; from whence we had now, for many Years, ſhut out thoſe idle Gentlemen, who ſeem'd more delighted to be pretty Objects themſelves, than capable of any Pleaſure, from the Play: Who took their daily Stands, where they might beſt elbow the Actor, and come in for their Share of the Auditor's Attention. In many a labour'd Scene of the warmeſt Humour, and of the moſt affecting Paſſion, have I ſeen the beſt Actors diſconcerted, while theſe buzzing Muſcatos have been fluttering round their Eyes, and Ears. How was it poſſible an Actor, ſo embarraſs'd, ſhould keep his Impatience, from entering into that different Temper which his perſonated Character might require him, to be Maſter of?

Future Actors may perhaps wiſh I would ſet this Grievance, in a ſtronger Light; and, to ſay the truth, where Auditors are ill-bred, it cannot well be expected, that Actors ſhould be polite. Let me therefore ſhew, how far an Artiſt in any Science is apt to be hurt by any ſort of Inattention to his Performance.

While the famous *Corelli*, at *Rome*, was playing ſome Muſical Compoſition of his own, to a ſelect Company in the private Apartment of his Patron-Cardinal, he obſerved, in the height of his Harmony, his Eminence was engaging, in a detach'd

tach'd Converſation; upon which he ſuddenly ſtopt ſhort, and gently laid down his Inſtrument: The Cardinal, ſurpriz'd at the unexpected Ceſſation, ask'd him, if a String was broke? To which, *Corelli*, in an honeſt Conſcience of what was due to his Muſick, reply'd, No, Sir, I was only afraid I interrupted Buſineſs. His Eminence, who knew that a Genius could never ſhew itſelf to Advanrage, where it had not its proper Regards, took this Reproof in good part, and broke off his Converſation, to hear the whole *Concerto* play'd over again.

Another Story will let us ſee, what Effect a miſtaken Offence of this Kind had upon the *French* Theatre; which was told me by a Gentleman of the long Robe, then at *Paris*, and who was himſelf the innocent Author of it. At the Tragedy of *Zaire*; while the celebrated Mademoiſelle *Goſſin* was delivering a Soliloquy, this Gentleman was ſeized with a ſudden Fit of Coughing, which gave the Actreſs ſome Surprize, and Interruption; and his Fit increaſing, ſhe was forced to ſtand ſilent ſo long, that it drew the Eyes of the uneaſy Audience upon him; when a *French* Gentleman leaning forward to him, ask'd him, If this Actreſs had given him any particular Offence, that he took ſo publick an Occaſion to reſent it? The *Engliſh* Gentleman, in the utmoſt Surprize, aſſur'd him, So far from it, that he was a particular Admirer of her Performance; that his Malady was his real Misfortune, and if he apprehended any Return of it, he would rather quit his Seat, than diſoblige either the Actreſs, or the Audience.

This publick Decency in their Theatre, I have myſelf ſeen carried ſo far, that a Gentleman in their *ſecond Loge*, or Middle-Gallery, being obſerv'd to ſit forward himſelf, while a Lady ſate behind him, a loud Number of Voices call'd out to him, from the Pit, *Place à Dame! Place à Dame!* When

the

the Perſon ſo offending, either not apprehending the Meaning of the Clamour, or poſſibly being ſome *John Trott*, who fear'd no Man alive, the Noiſe was continued for ſeveral Minutes; nor were the Actors, though ready on the Stage, ſuffer'd to begin the Play, till this unbred Perſon was laugh'd out of his Seat, and had placed the Lady before him.

Whether this Politeneſs, obſerv'd at Plays, may be owing to their Clime, their Complexion, or their Government, is of no great Conſequence; but, if it is to be acquired, methinks it is pity our accompliſh'd Countrymen, who every Year, import ſo much of this Nation's gawdy Garniture, ſhould not, in this long courſe of our Commerce with them, have brought over a little of their Theatrical Good-breeding too.

I have been the more copious upon this Head, that it might be judged, how much it ſtood us upon, to have got rid of thoſe improper Spectators, I have been ſpeaking of: For whatever Regard we might draw by keeping them, at a Diſtance, from our Stage, I had obſerv'd, while they were admitted behind our Scenes, we but too often ſhew'd them the wrong Side of our Tapeſtry; and that many a tollerable Actor was the leſs valued, when it was known, what ordinary Stuff he was made of.

Among the many more diſagreeable Diſtreſſes, that are almoſt unavoidable, in the Government of a Theatre, thoſe we ſo often met with from the Perſecution of bad Authors, were what we could never intirely get rid of. But let us ſtate both our Caſes, and then ſee, where the Juſtice of the Complaint lies. 'Tis true, when an ingenious Indigent, had taken, perhaps, a whole Summer's Pains, *invitâ Minervâ*, to heap up a Pile of Poetry, into the Likeneſs of a Play, and found, at laſt, the gay Promiſe of his Winter's Support, was rejected,

and

and abortive, a Man almoſt ought to be a Poet himſelf, to be juſtly ſenſible of his Diſtreſs! Then, indeed, great Allowances ought to be made for the ſevere Reflections, he might naturally throw upon thoſe pragmatical Actors, who had no Senſe, or Taſte of good Writing. And yet, if his Relief was only to be had, by his impoſing a bad Play upon a good Set of Actors, methinks the Charity that firſt looks at home, has as good an Excuſe for its Coldneſs, as the unhappy Object of it, had a Plea for his being reliev'd, at their Expence. But immediate Want was not always confeſs'd their Motive for Writing; Fame, Honour, and *Parnaſſian* Glory had ſometimes taken a romantick Turn in their Heads; and then they gave themſelves the Air of talking to us, in a higher Strain------ Gentlemen were not to be ſo treated! the Stage was like to be finely govern'd, when Actors pretended to be Judges of Authors, *&c.* But dear Gentlemen! if they were good Actors, why not? How ſhould they have been able to act, or riſe to any Excellence, if you ſuppos'd them not to feel, or underſtand what you offer'd them? Would you have reduc'd them, to the meer Mimickry of Parrots, and Monkies, that can only prate, and play a great many pretty Tricks, without Reflection? Or how are you ſure, your Friend, the infallible Judge, to whom you read your fine Piece, might be ſincere in the Praiſes he gave it? Or, indeed, might not you have thought the beſt Judge a bad one, if he had diſliked it? Conſider too, how poſſible it might be, that a Man of Senſe would not care to tell you a Truth, he was ſure you would not believe! And, if neither *Dryden*, *Congreve*, *Steele*, *Addiſon*, nor *Farquhar*, (if you pleaſe) ever made any Complaint of their Incapacity to judge, why is the World to believe the Slights you have met with from them, are either undeſerv'd, or particular? Indeed! indeed, I am not conſcious that we ever did you, or any of your Fraternity the leaſt Injuſtice! Yet this was not all we had

to

to ſtruggle with; to ſuperſede our Right of rejecting, the Recommendation, or rather Impoſition of ſome great Perſons (whom it was not Prudence to diſoblige) ſometimes came in, with a high Hand, to ſupport their Pretenſions; and then, *cout que cout* acted it muſt be! So when the ſhort Life of this wonderful Nothing was over, the Actors were, perhaps, abus'd in a Preface, for obſtructing the Succeſs of it, and the Town publickly damn'd us, for our private Civility.

I cannot part, with theſe fine Gentlemen Authors, without mentioning a ridiculous *Diſgraccia*, that befell one of them, many Years ago: This ſolemn Bard, who, like *Bayes*, only writ for Fame, and Reputation; on the ſecond Day's publick Triumph of his Muſe, marching in a ſtately full-bottom'd Perriwig into the Lobby of the Houſe, with a Lady of Condition in his Hand, when raiſing his Voice to the Sir *Fopling* Sound, that *became the Mouth of a Man of Quality*, and calling out--- Hey! Box-keeper, where is my Lady ſuch-a-one's Servant, was unfortunately anſwer'd, by honeſt *John Trott*, (which then happen'd to be the Box-keeper's real Name) Sir, we have diſmiſs'd, there was not Company enough to pay Candles. In which mortal Aſtoniſhment, it may be ſufficient to leave him. And yet had the Actors refus'd this Play, what Reſentment might have been thought too ſevere for them?

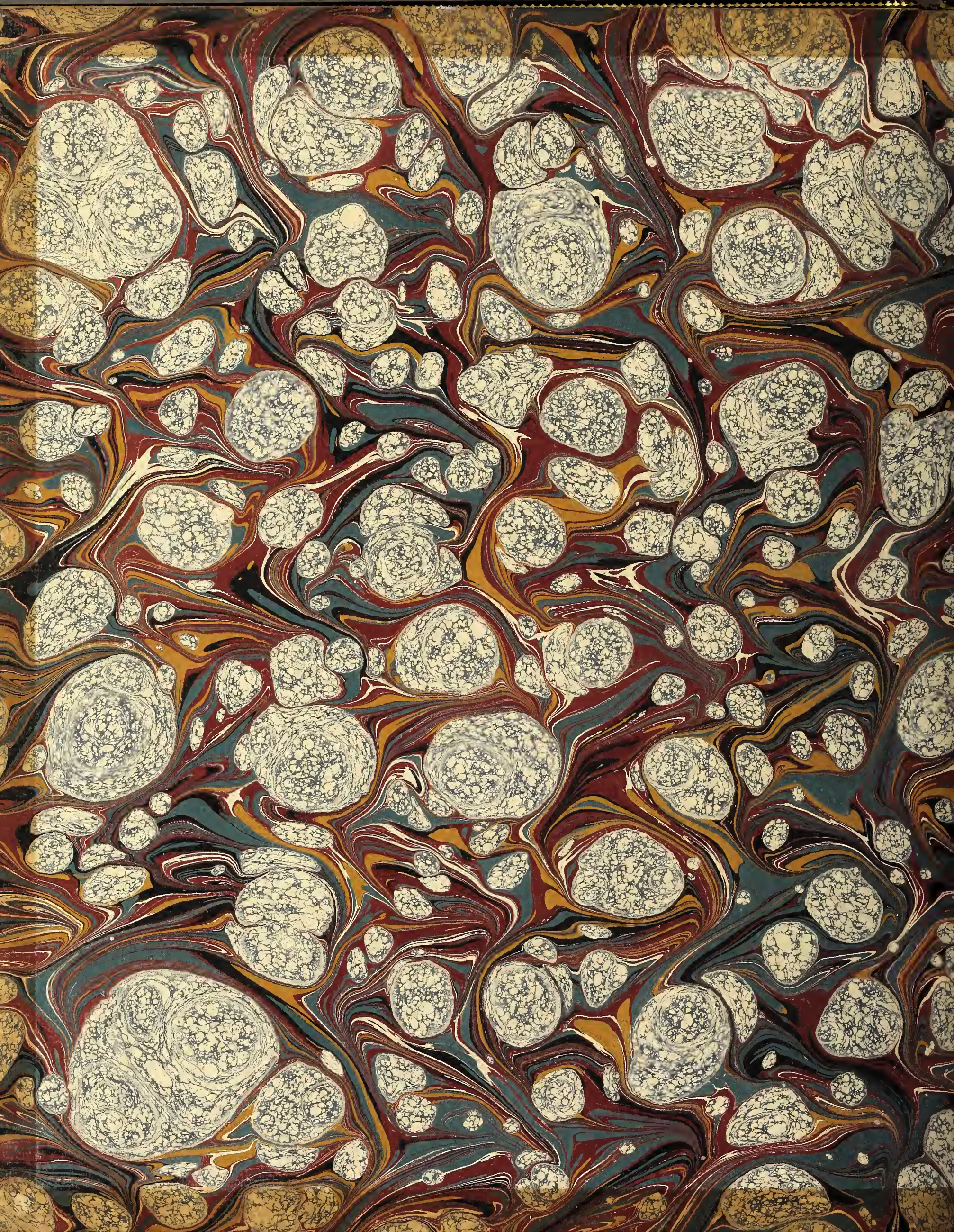
Thus was our Adminiſtration often cenſured for Accidents, which were not in our Power to prevent: A poſſible Caſe, in the wiſeſt Governments. If therefore ſome Plays have been preferr'd to the Stage, that were never fit to have been ſeen there, let this be our beſt Excuſe for it. And yet, if the Merit of our rejecting the many bad Plays, that preſs'd hard upon us, were weigh'd againſt the few, that were thus impoſed upon us, our Conduct, in general, might have more Amendments of the Stage to boaſt of, than Errors to anſwer for. But it is now Time to drop the Curtain.

During

During our four laſt Years, there happen'd ſo very little unlike what has been ſaid before, that I ſhall conclude with barely mentioning thoſe unavoidable Accidents, that drew on our Diſſolution. The firſt, that for ſome Years had led the way to greater, was the continued ill State of Health, that render'd *Booth* incapable of appearing on the Stage. The next was the Death of Mrs. *Oldfield*, which happen'd on the 23d of *October*, 1730. About the ſame Time too Mrs. *Porter*, then in her higheſt Reputation for Tragedy, was loſt to us, by the Misfortune of a diſlocated Limb, from the overturning of a *Chaiſe*. And our laſt Stroke was the Death of *Wilks*, in *September*, the Year following, 1731.

Notwithſtanding ſuch irreparable Loſſes; whether, when theſe favourite Actors, were no more to be had, their Succeſſors might not be better born with, than they could poſſibly have hop'd, while the former were in being; or that the generality of Spectators, from their want of Taſte, were eaſier to be pleas'd, than the few that knew better: Or that, at worſt, our Actors were ſtill preferable to any other Company, of the ſeveral, then ſubſiſting: Or to whatever Cauſe it might be imputed, our Audiences were far leſs abated, than our Apprehenſions had ſuggeſted. So that, though it began to grow late in Life with me; having ſtill Health, and Strength enough, to have been as uſeful on the Stage, as ever, I was under no viſible Neceſſity of quitting it: But ſo it happen'd that our ſurviving Fraternity having got ſome chimærical, and as I thought, unjuſt Notions into their Heads, which though I knew they were without much Difficulty to be ſurmounted; I choſe not, at my time of Day, to enter into new Contentions; and, as I found an Inclination in ſome of them, to purchaſe the whole Power of the Patent into their own Hands; I did my beſt, while I ſtaid with them, to make it worth their while to come up to my Price; and then patiently ſold out my

Share, to the firſt Bidder, wiſhing the Crew, I had left in the Veſſel, a good Voyage.

What Commotions the Stage fell into the Year following, or from what Provocations, the greateſt Part of the Actors revolted, and ſet up for themſelves, in the little Houſe, in the *Hay-Market*, lies not within the Promiſe of my Title-Page to relate: Or as it might ſet ſome Perſons living, in a Light, they poſſibly might not chuſe to be ſeen in, I will rather be thankful, for the involuntary Favour they have done me, than trouble the Publick, with private Complaints of fancied, or real Injuries.

F I N I S.